





*Dakar*

OUTPOST OF TWO

HEMISPHERES

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EMIL LENGYEL



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*To my wife,*

*Livia,*

*and my son,*

*Peter*





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## *Introduction*

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"THE FATE of the next war may be decided in Africa," General Erich Ludendorff wrote in the lull between the two World Wars. This prediction was startling because Africa then played only a passive role. She was the object of decisions, and had nothing to say about making them. Then, as today, all of Africa, with only a few exceptions, belonged to European Powers. She has been *the* colonial continent, a vast territory which outside Powers looked upon as spoils to be divided among themselves. The Black Continent has long been the white man's burden.)

The world knew vaguely that France was one of the two biggest colonial Powers in Africa (The map itself showed that the best sites belonged to Great Britain,) and to one of her great Dominions, the Union of South Africa. The



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map could not show, but history books did, that the primary colors which denoted English and French possessions symbolized great diplomatic battles. The final settlement had been preceded by an undeclared war in which both England and France were eager to amass as much land as they could. The map certainly did not show that France had tried to smash her way across the continent from ocean to ocean but was stopped by the British along the great waterway of the Nile.

(Vast stretches of Africa were tinted the color denoting French possessions.) That color covered endless deserts and burning steppes as well as forests, swarming with wild animals and breeding disease. (Why should a rich country like France accumulate so much wasteland?)

(Slowly the meaning of this began to become clear. France was playing a defensive game. She was strong, she knew, in her historical traditions, in the inventive genius of her people and the generosity of her soil. But she was weak in her powers of reproduction. She was too civilized to be really warlike and too well balanced to be aggressive and dynamic. Beyond the Rhine a storm was brewing.) It took form in a combative nationalism that was all the more explosive because it was so late in becoming articulate. The accumulated force of Germany was directed against her western neigh-

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bor, possessor of nearly everything that the newly created Reich lacked.

(With the intuition for which the French are famous they saw the ominous signs not yet visible to the naked eye.) They began to build the bulwarks that were to keep the elemental force of Germany in check. Africa was one sector of these bulwarks. Through her, the energy of France was to be revitalized (Africa had the man power to fill in the thinning ranks of native French.) She had vast horizons, stretching endlessly from the heart of the temperate to the heart of the tropical zone. She might even have wealth, although that was not the basic consideration. She was part of an uncivilized world. She was no danger yet to the West because she was totally unconscious of her strength. But she offered France a chance to continue her work as the great civilizing force of man. Africa was a *raison d'être* of French imperialism.

French Africa was also a means of face-saving after the disaster that befell France during the Franco-Prussian War. She meant prestige. She gave statesmen an opportunity to perpetuate their names. Into the making of Africa also went some irrational elements. Once an idea gets under way it creates its own laws of growth.

All this the world learned gradually. It also learned to

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distinguish between the two gradations of that vast splotch of color on the map: French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa. Beyond that the world gave little thought to these tropical colonies.

The name of Dakar was virtually unknown. She was far from the nearest tourist centers, and for a long time she was ignored as a stopping place on the highway of trade. Little attention was paid to her even after she had become the capital of French West Africa. There were many colonial towns on the Black Continent, but only the experts knew about them.

Suddenly Dakar was catapulted into the very center of interest. She became a household word almost overnight. For this there were several reasons. Dakar is on the very tip of the bulge which juts far into the Atlantic Ocean to face the bulge of South America. She is the nearest point of the Old World to the New World. Of course, this geographical position is nothing new. What *is* new is the revaluation of distances in modern terms. Actually, 1,620 sea miles cover the same distance as they did a century ago. Then this distance represented a fortnight's journey. Today it represents the travel of five hours. Then sailing vessels depended on favorable winds and tides. Now flight of the Atlantic over so short a distance has become mere routine.

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Expressed in time, Dakar has been moved within reach of the Americas.

Nor is this the only reason she has become a key point on the changing map of the world. Dakar is situated at a strategic junction of two of the heaviest-traveled sea lanes. One of those lanes links Europe with Latin America, which in itself would qualify her as a vital port on the world's life-line. The other of those lanes connects Europe with the Middle and Far East—India, Malaya, the Netherlands, the Indies and Australia. The opening of this second lane—which is an auxiliary one—was necessitated by the transfer of war operations to the Mediterranean in the Second World War. Traffic via Suez Canal had to be routed around the Cape of Good Hope.

Had Dakar remained merely the tropical village she had been so long, she would not have made a place in history. But meanwhile she had grown into the metropolis of the West Coast of Africa. Of all the ports on that coast she was by far the best equipped. For thousands of miles along the coast, no other city could match Dakar in importance.

Even under normal circumstances, Dakar would have been essential; but under the abnormal conditions precipitated by this war, she became crucial. Her master, France, became the slave of Germany when the French armed forces

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were defeated in the spring of 1940. The bulwark the French Republic had built with so much labor fell to pieces overnight. The man power of Africa on which France had counted so heavily became useless. The endless horizons of half of a continent—it was suspected—were delivered up to the enemy. Overseas France may have sought to retain the semblance of invincible strength, yet all the world knew it was a pathetic self-deception. In the Far East the French Empire began to fall to pieces.

To all appearances, French Africa stood her ground. The Germans did not even ask for the return of the colonies—Togoland and the Cameroons—which had been theirs until they were turned over to the French after the First World War. Well they knew why they did not demand the restoration of their former property. All French Africa would soon be theirs; they had only to wait for the cue to enter.

Dakar now became the spearhead of a country whose conquests had extended it all the way from Arctic Norway to the very heart of tropical Africa—fully one-half of the Eastern world. Instead of friendly France, this bastion of the South Atlantic fell into the hands of the most aggressive nation in recent history. The change wrought havoc with all the principles, doctrines, tenets and idiosyncrasies of the

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diplomacy of the United States. The German Reich was now but five hours away from the heart of the Americas.

That is why this book has been written. There is not one book on Dakar in the English language. Except for two brief monographs, even the French have neglected to write about it. Today Dakar is a world issue. Her fate is inextricably linked with our own.

Dakar does not dangle in the emptiness of an unfriendly African coast. She is the capital of a country more than one half the size of the United States. If we add the adjacent French Equatorial Africa, her hinterland is nearly as large as our own country. French West Africa, of which Dakar is the chief town, is part of the problem with which we, as a nation, may be directly concerned.

At the present time a railway line is being laid across the Sahara. Eventually, it is expected to reach the Niger River, which already has a railway connection with Dakar.) This line deserves attention not merely because it promises to be a remarkable achievement. Once finished, it would become an overland connection between the Western Mediterranean and the South Atlantic. That means that Gibraltar and other possible sentinels of alien Powers could not interfere with movements of men and goods between Europe and tropical French Africa. Across that line an aggressive coun-

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try's might could be massed against the defenders of the Americas. All the world knows what that country is. Because of the importance of this line for Dakar and the sea lanes she guards, a chapter of this book deals with the Trans-Saharan Railway.

Many unkind things have been said about the French since misfortune overtook them. Worse may be said about them in the future. This is not the time or place merely to condemn them. But this *is* both the time and place to say that a vast colonial empire was built up by this supposedly light-hearted, easy-going nation. This is the time and place to recall that the French have been great pioneers and missionaries of a great and creative idea. That is why it is necessary to devote a chapter to the French as colonizers.

Since Dakar in unfriendly hands is a menace to the Monroe Doctrine, the United States must pay close attention to this West African base. It might appear as if our country has just begun to take an interest in the African "bulge." This is the place to correct such a misapprehension. Increasingly, the United States has reason to be gravely concerned over developments in Dakar.

Finally, a chapter considers the group of islands which appear to be parts of Dakar's own "elbow room." These are the Azores, Madeira, the Canaries and the Cape Verdes, now

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in Spanish and Portuguese hands. Some of them seem like advanced bastions of the gigantic bulge of Africa, but all of them may turn out to be of vital importance in the Battle of the Atlantic. Their fate may have a bearing on the future of French Africa, and on the prediction of Ludendorff, the German war lord.

In order to avoid misunderstanding in the use of some oft-repeated terms, the following definitions may be of some service: A "colony" is a territory directly administered by another Power, not necessarily for its own exclusive benefit. Some colonies have wide discretionary powers in the conduct of their domestic affairs. A "protectorate" is nominally an independent foreign nation protected by another country. In reality, a protectorate is a colony in almost everything but the name. A "mandate" is one of the colonies which formed part of the German and Ottoman Empires before the First World War, turned over to the victors after the war for special administration. These territories were to be governed for the benefit of the inhabitants until such time as they were ready to assume self-government. In the meantime, the mandatory powers were held under obligation to render periodical accounts of their stewardship to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.



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Since the League of Nations has suspended most of its functions, the mandates, too, have become virtual colonies.

As the world situation moves to a new series of climaxes, the people of the United States must inform themselves on the potential dangers to all the Americas now gathering in Dakar.

E. L.

*Northport, L. I.*

*October, 1941.*

*Dakar*

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## *I. Gateway to a Continent*

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### THE PENINSULA

THE WESTERNMOST POINT of the Old World is the peninsula of Cape Vert. It is the nearest landfall from the South American continent. The largest city of this peninsula is Dakar. The city and its harbor face east, looking away from the Americas, because the peninsula here bends back, and Dakar is situated in the fold which is turned away from the Atlantic Ocean.

Dakar is still the capital of French West Africa, *Afrique Occidentale Française*, generally known by its initials as A. O. F. It is situated near the westernmost edge of the westernmost colony of this vast territory, Senegal.

A glance at the map clearly reveals Dakar's importance.

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The distance to the nearest point in the Americas, Natal in Brazil, is 1,620 miles. This route can be covered by a fast military plane in about five hours. Dakar is situated about half way between Southern Europe and the "bulge" of Brazil. She is on the route to Cape Town, via the Atlantic Ocean. Ships to India and beyond have been obliged to take this route since the commercial shipping was diverted from the Mediterranean after the outbreak of the Second World War.

Dakar is the best harbor on the entire west coast of Africa, between Casablanca in the north and Cape Town in the south. Africa's western coast is flat, and good harbors are few and far between. All of them need improvement. The port of Dakar is being improved. The city is the natural entrance gate of imports to the vast African empire of France, as well as its natural exit gate. It is connected by railway with the two principal highways into the interior of French West Africa, the Senegal and Niger Rivers.

The naval base of Dakar can accommodate the largest battleships afloat. It dominates a considerable part of the South Atlantic. The belligerent country which controls Dakar can hold the key to Europe's trade with South America. Even more significant, Dakar is an excellent base for raiding operations.

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Dakar lies in the heart of the tropics, about six hundred miles south of the Tropic of Cancer in a straight line, and a thousand miles north of the Equator. It is situated south of the great desert and north of the vast forest region of Africa, on the outskirts of the savannahs—the grass country. Dakar's meridian cuts Iceland into two nearly equal parts. New York and the southernmost point of Iceland and New York and Dakar are almost equidistant.

The name of Dakar is based on a misunderstanding. It means "tamarind tree" in one of the local native dialects. This tree is well known to travelers in the tropics because of its tough yellow wood and red-striped yellow flower. It grew in great profusion on the tongue of land jutting into the sea when early navigators approached Cape Vert. According to the traditional explanation, they pointed to the village and asked the natives its name. The black people, thinking the white travelers had asked the name of the tree, replied: "Tamarind, tamarind—*N'Dakar, N'Dakar.*"

The name of the peninsula, Cape Green—Cape Vert—is based upon a similar misunderstanding. The early Portuguese navigators visited it after the first torrential summer rains, when it was carpeted with brilliant green. Had they set eyes on the peninsula in the dry season, they would have been inclined to call it "Cape Bleak."

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Cape Vert, which Dakar has forced into world notice, is perched high on the shore by basalt cliffs. Originally it was a small island which became linked to the mainland as ocean currents deposited alluvial soil, forming a sand and gravel reef, known as *tombolo*. This combination of basalt and sand gives the cape its jagged and rounded geological formation.

The waters on the western side of the peninsula are known as Madeleine Bay, while those on the eastern are named the Bay Bernard. There are several other bays, such as Yoff and Hann. They are turned away from the north, and so are not exposed to its winds. Nor are they exposed to the ocean currents.

The very tip of the peninsula, the westernmost point of the Old World and of Africa, is Cape Almadies, the extreme end of Cape Vert. Its reefs jut far into the Atlantic Ocean, concealed by foam and mist. Few rocks on the African coast have brought so many ships to grief. Now its powerful beacons give warning to sailors for a distance of twenty-five miles. This is the coastal region of Dakar.

From here the landscape to the north is without distinction. It is endlessly flat. Its yellow sand blends into the moisture-saturated air. The nearest harbor is Saint-Louis, some 160 miles to the north. To the south, the shore line extends.

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in a straight line. There the nearest port is Bathurst, capital of British Gambia, which cuts into French Senegal.

In the direction of the city of Dakar, the first real landmarks on the peninsula are twin hills, called *Mamelles*—breasts—because of their rounded shape. To the south is Cape Manuel, one of the jaws of the pincers that enclose Bay Bernard. There was a time when Bay Bernard was looked upon with more favor as the site of a really first-class port. It is true that its high rocky coast affords it excellent protection from north and south, but it is not well enough protected from the east. Jetties could have been built, of course, but the jaws of the pincers are too wide apart. The cost of bringing them closer together would have been prohibitive. The cove of Dakar was chosen as the port simply because it had greater natural advantages.

The best part of "white" Dakar—the residential section—now faces Bay Bernard. This district is a trifle healthier than the rest of the city, because it is higher and more exposed to purifying winds. There is the sumptuous palace of the Governor General, the whiteness of which dazzles the eye. Not far from it is the magnificent Catholic Cathedral, dedicated to the victims of the First World War. The Cardinal Archbishop of Paris was brought to Dakar to consecrate it, suggesting the importance the colonial adminis-



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tration attached to the spreading of the Christian faith among the natives. The very domes, turrets, towers and friezes were meant to impress the blacks.

### HARBOR FOR WEST AFRICA

The port of Dakar itself is a natural harbor. It lies between two jetties. The southern one is the shorter of the two; previously it was known as the "Grand Jetty." It is about 2,000 feet long, while the northern jetty is 6,840 feet. The entrance between the two is 720 feet. This port includes two sections, one military and the other commercial. The military harbor, *rade militaire*, was built to accommodate four armored cruisers. Next to it is the drydock which, according to latest available figures, is 657 feet long and 92 feet wide. It is surmised, however, that the real figures have never been published, and that the dock is larger. Such statistics now fall under the category of "military secrets."

The commercial section of the harbor has also been extended to accommodate the largest luxury liners of the South American service. Many of the boats can be berthed at the piers, since over 7,000 feet of quayage are available. On the shore there is pretty nearly everything that may be re-

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quired for the service of a first-class harbor. So far as port equipment is concerned, Dakar has no match on the whole West African coast.

An electric-power plant serves the entire harbor, as well as the city. Several lines of railway tracks encircle the port. The marine arsenal is near by. The barracks are beyond the south jetty, protected by a fort. The *Compagnie Africaine de Manutention et d'Entrepôts de Combustibles* supplies the ships with provisions and fuel. The Ouakam airport is only a few miles to the west.

Facing Dakar is the island of Gorée, surprisingly similar in location to Governor's Island in the port of New York. It is about a mile from the nearest point of the peninsula. The island is only 900 yards long and 330 yards wide, so that it is little more than a barren rock. Even though small, its strategic importance is great, and it is heavily fortified, in anticipation of grave events. It was the principal settlement of the French along this coast for many generations. Then it made up in security what it may have lacked in natural attractions. As an island, Gorée provided a natural quarantine, and because of its sturdy cannon it kept the troublesome natives at a distance at a time when they were less placid than they are now.

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### PARIS IN THE TROPICS

Deep layers of sand have buried the basalt rock on which the best part of the European city has been built. Dakar looks partly very French and partly very colonial. If the visitor closed his eyes and forgot about the heat—which is, of course, out of the question—he might imagine himself in a corner of suburban Paris. Some of the houses are built in the same graceful but impractical style. Their little windows provide plenty of privacy, but very little air. The more modern houses present a happier blend of the attractive and the functional. They are long rather than wide, so as to catch all the available breezes. They have spacious terraces, verandas, and their windows are large. The roofs are high, and the attic absorbs some of the infernal heat.

A few of the houses might well be in Rotterdam or Copenhagen. They were built for the Scandinavians and the Dutch, who are well represented in Dakar's trade. Other houses were built in the so-called Portuguese style, which is more gaudy than elegant. Not many years ago thatched huts of the natives alternated with European villas, but they have now been removed.

Place Protet is the center of the European residential

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section. Some of the executive buildings are here, erected in the accepted style of semi-rococo, semi-baroque. Here are the boys' and girls' schools, the law courts. Here are also the residences of the higher officials of the Government. In their homes and gardens they have tried to re-create the spirit of their native France.

Most of the streets are straight, unlike the streets in Europe. In the new sections the town planners built the roadways wide and designed them to catch the north-eastern breezes. The parks and gardens extend toward the southwest. Gardeners trained on the French Riviera did their best to simulate the mood of the old country with the tropical vegetation of Senegal. The center of this district is the Place du Rond-Point.

The "Great White Way" of Dakar is the Avenue William Ponty, so named after a colonial executive. It is not very great, nor very white, but it does have a few attractions dear to the French heart. It has some restaurants which flaunt the names of French towns. The cooking, however, does scant justice to those names. It has a few cafés—very few—because the climate of Dakar does not encourage leisurely sessions under electric lights. Swarms of mosquitoes gather around the lights, and they feast on the diners. Actually, their bite can be deadly. This district also has a few

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cinemas, where the worst films of all the world may be seen. In the "Club de l'Union" one may sip *apéritifs*, read the papers, play cards behind thick nets. And, of course, one can always beguile the heavy hours—and one always does—by swearing at the climate.

The commercial houses are mostly concentrated near the Boulevard Pinet-Laprade, named for another colonial administrator. In the *comptoirs*—places of business—a brisk trade is carried on with the white and colored residents. The whites buy furniture and machines, the natives buy cotton goods, sell raw materials. Some of the stores look like Oriental bazaars. They are African "super-markets," full of flies and noise.

The Boulevard Maritime is the busiest street of Dakar. It is lined with banks, steamship company offices, storehouses and *comptoirs* of the oil, coal and provision firms. Here is also the open marketplace, where the natives display their vegetables, citrus fruits and papayas.

Until the First World War the natives and Europeans were not segregated. In 1914 a pestilence swept Dakar, and then it became necessary to build the native village toward the northeast. This was not at all a measure of racial discrimination; it was merely self-defense. The most deadly of all tropical diseases, yellow fever, is not mortal for the



WIDE WORLD PHOTO

THE HARBOR AT DAKAR



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natives. Since their standards of hygiene could not be improved overnight, it was safer to build an entirely new district for the blacks and thus avert the danger of constant contagion for the whites. With no difficulty the natives were induced to move to their new quarters, called Medina, Arabic for town. So vastly has the place grown that today it deserves the name of "city." Although the garbageman collects the refuse twice a day, the natives live in the filth to which they are devoted.

Originally a no man's land of nine hundred meters was left vacant between the European quarter and the native village. It was meant to serve as a quarantine. Subsequently, it was found to be superfluous, and the vacant lots were turned over to the builders.

### LIFE IN SLOW MOTION

Life in Dakar has its regular rhythm. Early in the morning, before the sun is too high, the village moves in on the city. The natives serve as stevedores and automobile drivers, clean the streets, run errands, perform menial work in the *comptoirs*. In this climate whites simply cannot perform hard physical work. They are managers and clerks, skilled



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artisans and government officials, officers and higher non-coms in the armed forces.

The sounds of activity ascend constantly in the early hours and reach a crescendo at mid-morning. The streets resound with the natives' shrill chatter. They boast shamelessly and like to display their strength now and then, but do not like to use it.

When midday approaches, the streets and quays become suddenly deserted. The sun is so hot in the dry season that not even the natives can endure it. In the rainy season it is unbearably stifling. Work ceases; everyone moves in a slow tempo. These are the hours of *siesta*. Life begins to throb anew only when the sun moves toward Cape Almadies. There is work to be done, a living to be made, even though no one can muster sufficient energy to be ambitious. Walking itself becomes an arduous labor. That is why there were as many as 3,500 motor vehicles in Dakar before the Second World War broke out. There were also about 150 buses, most of them in the local service, others making runs between the center of Dakar and the native village, as well as the more distant points along the coast.

At five in the afternoon business comes to a standstill. The natives stream back toward Medina, still chattering and vaunting their prowess. The life of the native village then

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resumes all its noises, smells and tam-tam music. Whites often visit its alleys as they visit Chinatown in New York, but to them the interior of the huts still remains a black mystery. Certainly the whites could not be attracted by what is inside. Their smells and vermin assure the best protection of native privacy.

The white settlement does not die in the afternoon; it merely subsides into another period of rest as it waits for the sun to sink. In this part of the tropics, dinner is an even more elaborate ritual than it is in France. Its prolonged delight is a compensation for the lost pleasures of civilized life in the temperate zone. Besides, here stomachs are more sensitive, and it is better for the white man's health to linger over the meal.

When cooling breezes descend from the north, Dakar comes alive again and moves into the streets and parks. Here, as elsewhere, lovers meet on the boulevards and the quayside. They watch the white and red flashes of the lighthouses at the entrance to the port. Silhouetted against the jetties and alongside the piers are always ships. To the spectators ashore they mean the white world, since these boats have come from afar. Before the Second World War they came from Europe and all parts of South America. They also came from India and from the countries beyond.

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Occasionally a boat from North America steamed into the harbor. Now there are big battleships, cruisers, destroyers, torpedo boats and all types of auxiliary vessels.

When the sky is clear, night-life may last far into the small hours. The long afternoon nap keeps people wide awake. This is the time to talk about home, to play cards and see those unspeakable films. Few inhabitants have the patience to sit down with a book. The tropics give no encouragement to serious study. Life is too enervating and tempers are on edge.

### HARMATTAN AND MONSOON

Climate and sickness play the leading roles in Dakar. The climate of the city is atrocious, even though it is better than in a large part of tropical Africa, and infinitely better than in the northern deserts, where summer temperatures often soar as high as 130 degrees in the shade.

In Dakar there are only two seasons: the rainy and the dry. The rainy months are part of the hot period, lasting from the end of June to about the middle of November. The great rains themselves arrive in the second half of June and end in the second half of September. This season is

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known as the *hivernage*. White residents prefer to know about it from a safe distance, Europe by choice, rather than live through it in Dakar. The dry season corresponds to our winter and spring. Both periods run to extremes: excessive precipitation in the rainy season and disastrous droughts in the dry months.

The prevailing wind of the dry season comes from the east and north—the African interior—and is known as the *harmattan*, Arabic word for evil. (Incidentally, its root, *haram*, also means the dwelling place of women.) As it moves seaward, the *harmattan* becomes completely dry and is laden with dust, much of which is lost in transit. By the time the wind reaches the Atlantic coast, it has gained transparency and sparkle. The sun is always scorching, but the evenings are sometimes delightfully cool. The sky is so blue that it is almost black, and the nights so brilliant that even prosaic souls grow lyrical about the stars. Sometimes, clouds gather, but the people of Dakar know that they mean nothing. The clouds vanish, and their world is still parched.

The *harmattan* is an evil thing because it contains no drop of water. The wells go dry; the gardens of the capital shrivel. Nomads visit the town for a drink of water, their greatest luxury. The streets and sewers of Dakar must be flushed with salt water from the sea.

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When Spring comes, the sting of the sun grows stronger and *siestas* are prolonged. A wind rises in the west, saturated with vapor. It is the monsoon, which is poor Arabic for *mausim*, season. In India it means, too, the rains that come in June and leave in September. The monsoon flows in slowly over Dakar and meets the *harmattan*. The winds meet, the sky becomes leaden, a somber dome covers the universe. A strange phenomenon mounts the horizon; it is the core of the storm, the meeting place of the winds. The sky is now lighted up with an internal flame, shooting pillars of fire in all directions. Huge arches drift slowly across the clouds, assuming fantastic colors. Then all stands still. No air stirs; breathing becomes painful. In a moment, a terrifying crash rends the world. The wind lays flat the heaviest baobab trees; birds flutter in a panic. There is a deluge, as if the massed clouds were trying to empty themselves all at once. For twenty minutes the Niagara of heaven floods the earth; then suddenly the sun reappears. Meanwhile the parched soil absorbs the water. Men and animals quench their thirst for the first time in months. But the relentless rains do not stop. Now there is too much water. Stagnating pools are formed, and mosquitoes, agents of death, begin to breed.

The rains leave swamps, *marigots*. Some of these are

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covered up; others swell into streams. The French have done much to fill in the pools and clear out long grass from the banks of the waterbeds. They have taught the natives to cover up cisterns and tanks. Mosquito larvae are being killed with kerosene, waste oil and Paris green. Much has been done to eradicate the two deadly diseases bred by the *hivernage*: yellow fever and malaria.

### FEVER-CARRYING MOSQUITOES

Health conditions at Dakar improve every year. But malaria is still prevalent and occasionally there are epidemics of yellow fever. There are also many other diseases, such as smallpox, dysentery, cerebro-spinal meningitis, beri-beri, leprosy. Among the natives pulmonary tuberculosis and syphilis claim the highest tolls. Tuberculosis is most dangerous for the nomads, who are called *dojhendem*, from *dojh*, march, and *endem*, go away. It is believed that white settlers were the first to import tuberculosis. At any rate, the natives scarcely know how to protect themselves in their unhygienic environment. A small hut in the native village may contain as many as a dozen inhabitants, all lying on the floor in one heap. The sick mingle with the healthy. The

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only garment they wear is little more than a loin-cloth. During the day it is very hot; during the night their huts may be very cold. They never wash, and their bodies are overrun with vermin.

The climate of Dakar is beneficial for white settlers afflicted with pulmonary tuberculosis. Nearly all of them get cured after residence of about five years. But they are subject to other diseases. They have to take large quantities of quinine as a preventive against malaria. In the long run the drug affects their systems. Tropical fever can seldom be escaped. Its telltale sign is a strange glow in tired eyes. It makes them lose weight and look emaciated. During the *bivernage* many of them get a prison pallor, since they hardly ever leave their offices and homes. The heavy nettings on their windows do not always succeed in keeping the mosquitoes out, but they certainly form a barrier against fresh air.

The mortality rate in Dakar is high. It was 34 per 1,000 in 1930. In the same year it was 11.3 in the United States. Infantile mortality was 35, as against the European average of 18. Care of children is practically unknown among the natives, although mothers are most affectionate. When babies are six months old they are put on a mixed diet, but mothers sometimes nurse their offspring up to the age

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of three. Besides their mother's milk, the children get as much of the adults' food as they can grab. Grown-ups and babies alike help themselves with their naked hands to food in the common gourd. If the mother goes dry, the child gets no milk, since a woman is expected to nurse only her own infant. Inflammation of the intestines and under-nourishment are among the most frequent causes of death.

Native hospitals have done good work. In Dakar there is a superior committee of hygiene and public health, attached to the Governor General's office. There is also a Biological Institute and laboratories, and a medical-veterinary school. Leprous patients are treated in two villages reserved for this purpose. Since rats are spreading some epidemics, their destruction has been undertaken on a large scale. This is known in official language as *deratisation*, and it is under the direction of the Chief Medical Officer, who exercises this function through a European specialist and native exterminators.

### WATER FOR THE SCORCHED EARTH

Water supply is another great problem of Dakar. In this colonial capital there is actually as much precipitation as in



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Paris, and that should be more than enough. But, as we have seen, the rains come suddenly and in deluges, only to be quickly absorbed by the parched earth. Much of this rain does more harm than good; it erodes the soil and is instantly lost in the sea. For about eight months there is not a drop while in the remaining four months there is an excessive downpour. As much precipitation may deluge Dakar in a few midsummer hours as in the same number of months in the French capital. The great problem was how to accumulate enough water in Dakar for the dry season.

Private persons sought to solve the problem by collecting rain in cisterns. Nothing could have been better for the mosquitoes, which had their breeding grounds right on the scene of their operations, but it was not so pleasant for the inhabitants. Besides, evaporation being high, the water was insufficient—and muddy, too.

The town fathers tried to catch rain in filter galleries situated in the northern part of Dakar. The water thus captured was allowed to flow into cisterns near the port, where anti-evaporation equipment was installed. While this water was of better quality, its quantity was insufficient to meet the needs of a fast-growing city.

Experts found that the sandy soil of Hann, to the north

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of Dakar, retained moisture. So they built filter galleries there, too. Near the village of M'Bao eleven wells were sunk and new galleries were erected. Instead of solving the problem, it has aggravated it, because the water level in the wells began to sink with alarming rapidity, leaving little else than a residue of slime.

With Dakar's growth as a port, the importance of water supply increased. Ships shun ports in which they cannot fill up their water-tanks. Dakar faced the danger of losing her supremacy as the leading harbor on the West African coast. The fear of being reduced again to the status of a tropical village spurred the authorities to greater efforts. At first they tried to give preference to visiting ships. Local consumption was curtailed. Temporarily it helped.

The problem became even more acute after the end of the First World War, when the black soldiers were streaming home. In Europe they had learned the use of water for washing—not merely for drinking. To make things worse, precipitation was abnormally low during the early post-war years. In 1921, for instance, it was 31 per cent less than normal. Since visiting ships had first call on the scanty supply, there was practically no water toward the end of the dry season. Water was distributed to the population only during three hours each day in the Spring months. The

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delivery pipes were now so cluttered up with clay that the trickle of water was all red. On top of all this, the electric plant operating the water works broke down. The demilitarized soldiers were greatly disappointed. On the battlefield they had been promised a heroes' reward. Now, that they had come home, they were denied even water.

Greatly concerned about the situation, Governor General Merlin of French West Africa paid a visit to France in 1922. He had heard about a certain Dr. Moineau, who was said to be able to find water. The Governor General had seen several "dowsers" follow spurious traces with forked hazel-twigs. He had been disappointed in the charlatans' "subconscious suggestions" and "homing instincts." But Dr. Moineau made no claim whatever to the performance of miracles. He was guided by strict scientific observations. All bodies, he said, radiate a certain energy, causing minute vibrations. It is these vibrations to which some highly sensitive persons react. He produced proof to corroborate his assertion that he was such a hypersensitive person.

The Governor General, desperate for help, concluded a contract with him and took him right back to Dakar. Dr. Moineau promptly set to work in the environs of the capital. He reached a terrain which looks like a vast tub with turned-up edges. In the north and south it is bounded by sand

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dunes, in the east by a place which the military maps designate as "Point B," and in the west by a plateau on which stands the village of Ouakam, site of the airport of Dakar. Dr. Moineau decided to take certain measurements there, and he found four floors of water. The topmost one was three and a half meters below the surface, and the bottom, 53 meters. He found the two higher levels polluted, but the third layer contained enough pure water for all Dakar.

Soon thereafter the Public Works Administration began the drillings. The workmen ran into layers of basaltic rock which were hard to penetrate, but the difficulties were overcome, the wells were opened and reservoirs were constructed. The miracle was achieved. Dakar had been saved by Dr. Moineau from falling to the level of a lost village in Africa. Now the survival of Dakar was assured. It could flourish until it became the most important harbor on the "bulge" of the black continent.

### CONTRASTING COLORS

The city of Dakar has an estimated population of 75,000, of whom slightly more than 10,000 are white. The entire Cape Vert peninsula, together with the island of Gorée, has

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a population of about 100,000. The people of the capital comprise whites, blacks and half-breeds. Among the whites, the French are the largest group. Most of them are government officials and members of the armed forces. Since Dakar is the capital of French West Africa and, from 1940, the seat of the High Commissariat of all Africa, as well as an important naval, military and air base, she has a large bureaucracy. Statistics show that the Frenchman is not a settler in his own colonies. The percentage of Frenchmen to the bulk of the population in A. O. F. is smaller even than in most other colonies of France. The number of white settlers in Dakar varies, of course, from season to season in normal times. During the rainy *hivernage*, the number is noticeably smaller than during the dry spell.

Among the whites there are several with gradations of darker skin: the Moors and Berbers, the natives of the Mediterranean littoral and its vast desert hinterland. Some of them may be descendants of the Zenega Berbers who pitched their tents near the Senegal River.

The large majority of the people of Dakar are black. They are real Negroes and not Negroid, such as one finds among the so-called pygmies farther south. The prevailing type is tall, burly, short-legged, long-headed, with a bulging forehead. Where did they come from? When you ask this

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question of them they turn toward the east. There is an almost general agreement among scientists that the black people of French West Africa are not aborigines. The original stock were of smaller stature, like the pygmies who have survived only in certain sections of the Belgian Congo. A wave of taller newcomers seems to have been pushing northward in prehistoric times. Some say they had come from Asia, others that they had originated in Oceania. These tall people pushed the little black fellows out of the way.

The Lebus are the oldest inhabitants of Dakar. Today they are only the second-largest group there. Lebu was one of the names the people of ancient Egypt gave their western neighbors, the Berbers. These Dakar Lebus were originally fishermen, and extremely proud of their occupation. Subsequently, a new master race or hunger forced them to till the soil. They never liked agriculture, and they are averse to hard work. By temperament they are haughty and aristocratic. In Dakar they are very well known, since they all but monopolize the chauffeurs' trade. They are those daredevil drivers who delight in missing death by a hair's breadth.

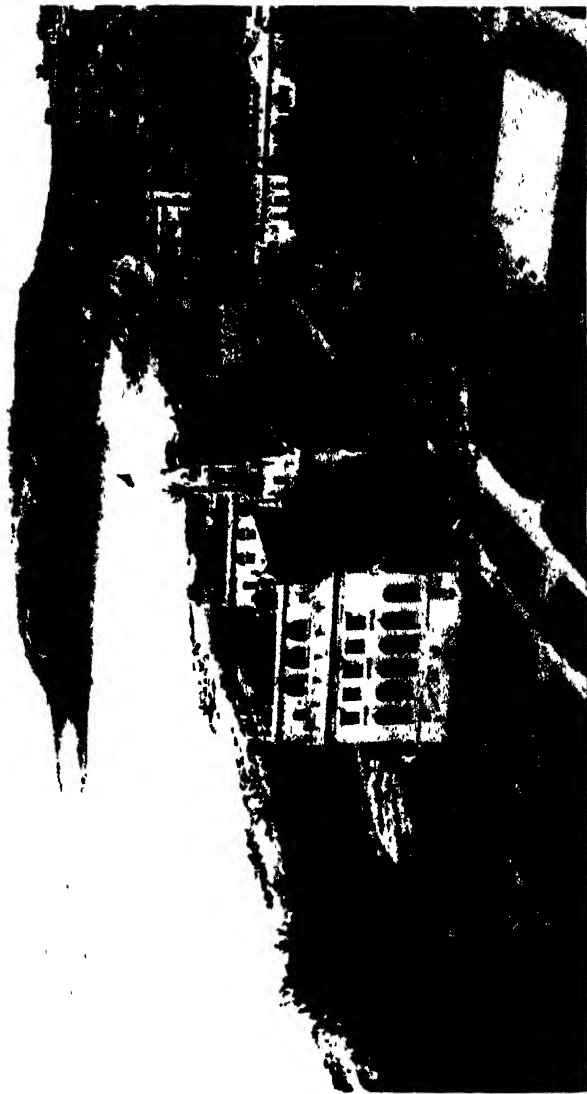
The largest native group in Dakar is that of the Ouolofs. In all A. O. F. there are about a half million of them. They are among the blackest of all Negroes on the entire African continent. They are tall, well-built, pleasant-looking.

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Originally their chieftains ruled over the three adjacent Kingdoms of Oualo, Djolof and Cayor. It was because of their good nature that the early French colonizers encountered so little resistance in this coastal region. Higher wages and less work induced them to move to Dakar, along with several other tribes.

The Ouolofs are credulous and vain. Very childlike, they are overbold, perhaps because they lack imagination and cannot see danger. They live from day to day. Originally, they had the reputation of being very sober, but contact with the whites taught them the excitement of drunken sprees. This is not true of the Mohammedans among them, whose religion forbids such indulgence. The Ouolofs are extremely loyal. When an appeal is made to their sense of honor, they will even overcome their ingrained sloth. No Ouolof has ever abandoned a white man in a shipwreck, a French author remarks. They will die rather than yield when they take their most solemn oath by their mother's nose. It was these Negroes who made the lowly peanut the greatest crop of Senegal. They are also skillful in jewel-setting.

The language of the Ouolofs is different from all other African tongues. It is largely monosyllabic. Their vocabulary is scant, and they manage to get along with a bare five hundred words. It is the language of a large section of the



PAUL G. GUILLUMETTE

RESIDENTIAL SECTION AND BAY, DAKAR  
GOVERNOR'S PALACE IN THE FOREGROUND





region popularly called Senegambia, because it includes the colony of Senegal, Dakar's hinterland, and the English territory of Gambia.

The third largest group of Dakar is that of the Toucouleurs or, more correctly, Toucoulaurs. Their name—all colors—is descriptive, as they are a highly mixed race, although the dominant color is black. They came from the northern slopes of the eastern mountains and from the upper reaches of the Senegal River. These all-color people are intelligent and remarkably industrious for tropical Africa, but they, too, are obstinate and vain. Those strapping black non-coms. the American doughboys admired in France were probably Toucoulaurs. In A. O. F. there are only a quarter of a million members of this tribe. But they have imposed their soft language on the Peuhls, of whom there are about four times as many.

The Peuhls are also known as Pouls, Foulbes and Foulas. In their own language *Foulbe* means "scattered." "Our ancestors came from there," they point toward the northeast. "We ourselves have come from there," and they point toward the Futa-Djallon massif of mountains in the southeast. General Faïdherbe, the great French West African commander and colonizer, believed that the Peuhls were descendants of a Semitic race. "They are the wandering

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Jew," Camille Guy says in *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*. While there is almost unanimous agreement that they had come from the east, opinions differ widely about the details. Some scholars believe their ancestors trekked westward all the way from Syria. Others maintain that the Sinai peninsula was their birthplace. Still another group of scientists holds that the Peuhls began their long wandering in the Libyan desert.

Many of them do not look like Negroes, and their skin is not any darker than the South Italians'. Their hair is straight, their lips are thin, they are tall, and elegant-looking. The beauty of their wives is proverbial in this part of Africa. As in the house of Israel, the woman is the mistress of her home. All Peuhls seem to have a meditative air. They treasure music highly. They are a pastoral tribe.

The cross of the Peuhls and the real blacks are the Foulas, who are also represented in Dakar. Most of them, however, have stayed back in the Futa-Djallon range, a natural refuge. Although their blood is mixed, they consider themselves white, and scorn the Negroes. In the mountains they live in strange houses, dug into the ground, and projecting from it less than two feet. These huts look like huge ant heaps—a perfect camouflage. Six or seven *cases* form

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a primitive fort, occupied by a family. While the nobles and freemen live together, the slaves are kept out of the way.

"The black man is naturally good," General Faidherbe wrote, "with an intelligence comparable to the white man's. But he is lacking in character, i.e., will power, prevision, perseverance, so that he will always be at the mercy of races better endowed in those respects. . . ."

In Dakar the majority of the blacks are Mohammedans. Many of them are not always strict in observing the Prophet's word. Some of them still adhere to the animism of their ancestors. There are also some Catholics among the natives, especially on Gorée. But the Roman Catholic Church has not made many converts, while Islam continues to make progress. The number of Protestants is small. Generally, religious loyalty means little to the Ouolof. Unable to make up his mind about the competing creeds, he can become as zealous a Mohammedan as he had been a Catholic or a worshipper of idols.

### THE PEANUT INDUSTRY

The people of Dakar are engaged in all the occupations which a large port and a tropical administrative center pro-

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vide. The big business of Dakar, of the colony of Senegal, and of the entire French West Africa, is *arachides*, peanuts. Dakar is the world's greatest peanut exporting center. The smaller port of Rufisque, a score of miles down the coast, once the main port for the peanut industry, is fast losing out to the capital.

In 1910 the tonnage of boats entering and leaving Dakar harbor amounted to 1,650,000. Ten years later it increased to 6,161,000, and in 1928 it reached its height with 9,300,000 tons. During the depression it declined to 7,500,000 in 1930. Dakar became the third largest port of all Greater France, exceeded only by Marseille and Le Havre. She was the terminus or port of call of a very large number of boats on the following routes: New York to Sapele, in British Nigeria; New York to Congo, the Belgian colony; New York to Angola, the Portuguese colony; Marseille to Dakar; Bordeaux to the port of Matadi in Belgian Congo; Liverpool to Sapele and Liverpool to Douala, in French Equatorial Africa; Hamburg to Sapele; Hamburg to Douala; Hamburg to Pointe Noire, in French Equatorial Africa; Hamburg to Buenos Aires; Genoa to Buenos Aires; Genoa to Gabon, in French Equatorial Africa; Naples to Buenos Aires. The Belgian line from Antwerp to Douala also called at Dakar.

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Next in importance to the occupations provided by the port, the colonial government gives livelihood to many inhabitants of Dakar. The Governor General looks after the interests of the entire vast colony. Dakar is the seat of all the bureaus of inspection and control, of the Bank of A. O. F., vested with the exclusive right to issue notes in circulation in the colony, of the Court of Appeals, the highest court.

The city of Dakar, the island of Gorée and the environs of the capital, the *banlieux*, have been detached from French West Africa and set up as an autonomous territory in an arrangement that reminds one of the special status of Washington, D. C. A Governor of Colonies heads this autonomous territory, *circonscription de Dakar*. His staff adds to the number of office-holders.

The bases of the various armed forces also provide employment for the inhabitants of Dakar. The capital is the marine headquarters of French West Africa. Before the Second World War broke out, a General of Division headed the army units with the title of *Commandant Supérieur*, ranking with the commander of a full army corps.

Dakar is not an industrial city. The very latitude in which the city lies precludes the possibility of any large industries. But she does have several plants of some im-

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portance. Her refineries are kept busy with the vegetable oils of which A. O. F. is a large producer. She has an electric-power station, with which it is expected that the entire railway line from Dakar up the coast to Saint-Louis, at the estuary of the Senegal River, will be electrified. There are plants for the production of oxygen and liquid air, of ice and soap, for bricks made out of the sand of the dunes. There is a fairly large brewery in Dakar, repair shops for equipment, garages, and shops of small artisans, such as cabinet-makers. Within the limits set by nature, the city of Dakar has taken advantage of her opportunities. By West African standards, Dakar is a metropolis.



## *II. Landscape in Black and White*

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### PERFUMES AND FLAMES

THE PREHISTORIC TIMES of Dakar ended only in the late seventeenth century. Until then she was merely an indistinct part of the dreary African landscape which navigators scarcely seemed to notice. They were interested in the Spice Islands and the fabulous countries of the East. Africa was a place to avoid.

Much has been written, although little is known, about an age that no man can remember, since no man was then walking on the surface of the earth. "Millions of years ago," wrote Alfred Wegener, Professor of Geophysics and Meteorology at the University of Graz, "the South American continental plateau lay directly adjoining the African



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plateau, even forming with it a large connected mass." Dakar belonged then to South America, as Rio de Janeiro belonged to East Africa. The great separation took place in the Cretaceous age, when the white cliffs of Dover were born on the English Channel and when coal began to accumulate west of the Great Plains of the North American continent.

The vast mass of land split into two parts and began to float apart like icebergs. Dakar remained on the hither shore, although she barely escaped drifting westward. As the huge mass of land moved away, Professor Wegener says, its western rim bumped into the floor of the Pacific Ocean. That floor was already cool, therefore resistant, and as a result of the gigantic collision, huge blocks of land began to pile up on the Pacific shore. Today we call them the Andes and the Rocky Mountains.

"Every projection on the Brazilian side," Professor Wegener writes, "corresponds to a similarly shaped bay in Africa, and, conversely, each indentation in the African coast has a complementary protuberance in South America." Scientists call this phenomenon the "continental drift," and its explanation is known as the "displacement theory." The bulges of Africa and America have been compared to identical twins.

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The displacement theory has many foes. "It is inconceivable," insists Edward W. Berry, Professor of Paleontology at Johns Hopkins University, in a symposium on the Wegener hypothesis, "that masses of continental size should move over such large arcs and preserve their outlines of either coast or the continental margin intact."

We have a little more knowledge about more recent prehistoric times around Dakar, although it is much less than our knowledge of the regions farther to the north.

When digging for water or building forts, remnants of the New Stone Age have been found by accident. The commander of a battalion of colonial infantry, M. Reynal, unearthed in 1922 a collection of flint points northeast of the race course of Dakar. In the same year employees of the Dakar Water Works exposed farther south an ancient beach containing an abundance of potteries. All kinds of flint instruments and household utensils of the New Stone Age have been found: bowls, bracelets, graders, scrapers, bevels and blades. Remnants of megalithic monuments were discovered by Dr. Jouenne, a physician of the Medical Association of West Africa. He maintained they were altars to the sun and monuments of fire-worshippers. These relics are of interest to us only to the extent that they corroborate the fact

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that people of this country beyond the desert passed through the same stages of civilization familiar to us in the basin of the Mediterranean.

The site of Dakar was seen by Hanno, the Columbus of Carthage, who penetrated to these parts with three score ships. He liked the perfumed air of the peninsula so much that he would have liked to see it become the site of New Carthage. He saw the difficulties and recorded them: "This is a country in flames, full of perfume, but hardly accessible because of the heat."

He described his travels on tablets, which he deposited in the Temple of Melkhart, the Sun God King of Carthage. Only the Greek translation of the tablets has survived, and it is not fully to be trusted. The original has been lost.

For centuries a silence envelops the entire Cape Vert. If there was a village on it, its name was not Dakar; the nomadic tribes, using a Babel of tongues, may have given it many names.

We do know, however, that adventurers from Dieppe visited the tropics in search of ivory and gold. They probably made use of the natural port which was to become Dakar later on. The boldest sailors of those days, the Portuguese, saw this country, and gave the name of Cape Verde

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to the green salient. Ultimately the French renamed it Cape Vert.

After they had seized the richest colonial treasure, the Netherland Indies, the Dutch also displayed deep interest in the route down the West African coast. They occupied the small island across Dakar and gave it the name of a town of their own, Gorée. So it is known to this very day.

Until the middle of last century the story of Dakar was, largely, the story of Gorée. That barren little island had a brisk trade with many lands. Ships of Philadelphia registry often visited it, en route to the Cape of Good Hope. Dutch boats called here on their way to Europe with the produce of South America. On their return they picked up slaves, so as to avoid sailing in ballast. It was in 1620 that the first shipload of Negroes was sold to North Americans. The vessel was of Netherlands registry, the town she called at was Jamestown in Virginia, the slaves were from the west coast of Central Africa, and the buyers were Southern tobacco planters. Gorée was the base of this triangular trade well into the eighteenth century.

The house of the slaves, *la maison des esclaves*, may still be seen at Gorée. The chains are rotting away, but the small door across which live slaves were dragged to the boats still stands. Dead slaves were thrown to the sharks. About

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one half of the unfortunate Negroes died in transit, killed by epidemics and harsh treatment.

Negro chieftains themselves took part in the manhunt. They set fire to villages and caught the inhabitants while trying to escape. The native rulers collected their commissions from white traders in gold and trinkets. More than two million slaves were transported from 1680 to 1786 to the American colonies and the West Indies. It must have been a most lucrative business. The houses of slave traders on the island of Gorée betray their former magnificence even in decay.

Late in the seventeenth century Gorée changed masters; a French admiral, d'Estrées, took the island from the Dutch, acting in the name of the *Compagnie du Sénégal*, a private trading company, similar to the English and Dutch East India Companies. French history in West Africa goes back to 1677, the year of the occupation.

The Dutch were not, however, to be ousted so easily. Lacking armed strength to face the French, they stirred up the natives. The French crushed the revolt, and imposed their terms on the strongest ruler of the coast. He was forced to hand over two kinsmen to the victors for safekeeping in a fort as a guarantee of his good behavior.

## THE FRENCH AT DAKAR

French occupation of the Cape Vert peninsula was neither continuous nor firmly established. By the middle of the eighteenth century the original deeds of ownership were completely forgotten. It was in 1763 that the French Governor of Gorée, M. Poncet de la Rivière, concluded a treaty with the Damel (King) of Cayor, most powerful of the native rulers, in which several towns, including Dakar (spelled in the document as D'accard), were turned over to the French "in exchange for having ransomed the king's kinsmen from the English."

The treaty-deed was made out in the name of the French Governor and not in the name of the King of France. The Governor explained in an accompanying statement that the contracting party was really His Majesty the King, but that the natives insisted on signing the document with a person they actually knew.

Apparently treaties in those days were not worth any more than they are today, because the following year another pact was signed by the French Governor and the native king. The treaty began magnificently:

"We, Jacques Destouble de Savigny, Captain of His Most

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Christian Majesty of the Royal Port of the Island of Gorée, Envoy in the quality of Ambassador, acting through Messire Jean Georges Le Baliff d'Esmerager, Chevalier of the Royal and Military Order of Saint Louis, Master of the Cavalry Camp, Brigadier of the King's Armies . . . being duly authorized to negotiate with the king (Damel), in accordance with several articles of our instructions, being transported thither, together with our suite, and having been there on this very day, have agreed on the following terms."

In this treaty the French received Cape Vert, acquiring the right to build forts there. The King of France promised in his own name and in the name of all his successors to maintain eternal peace with the Damel and his successors.

No matter how grandiloquent the treaty sounded, it resulted in absolutely nothing. The French took no steps whatever to occupy the territory assigned to them. The monarchy was falling to pieces and it lacked even the strength to maintain itself at home. The *ancien régime* was too sick to bother about mud villages in Central Africa. But England was healthy, and she was collecting a large number of just such vermin-infested spots, many of which turned out to be brilliant investments.

Less than three years before the outbreak of the Revolution, the King of France appointed the Chevalier de Boufflers

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Governor of the colony of all Senegal, the hinterland of Gorée and Dakar. The new Governor was forty, very intelligent and ambitious. He wanted to become a great success in Africa, but above all he wanted to marry the lady of his heart, Madame la Comtesse de Sabran, twenty-seven, rich and presumably attractive. We do not know whether she was divorced or widowed, but we do know that she was free to marry. Although the new Governor was very much in love with the lady, he did not want to marry her before his own fortune equaled hers.

The Chevalier kept a journal, and he also wrote regularly to the Countess. He appears to have been more truthful in his daily record of events than in his correspondence. "What a pleasure to think," he wrote to the Countess, "that with a small treaty and a trifling gift I shall acquire a superb province for the king or perhaps for myself!"

The following entry reveals clearly the difficulties of dealing with a Negro king:

"I have just returned from His Majesty the King (Damel). He granted me full ownership rights to the land I had requested and signed the treaty. After signing it, he sent people running after me, transmitting the message that all was off because he had been told that he would die within a year if he ceded the land. Nevertheless, I shall



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take possession of the empire, ignoring the monarch's message and honoring his signature. I shall, however, take the precaution of returning my envoys to him with a beautiful letter and most attractive gifts. I hope that gold and silver will so blind him to the danger of death that I shall be able to win a province for a saddle, a saddle-cloth and three silver plates. I shall try to induce the King of France to invest me with sovereign rights, so that I shall be an African Prince and my Lady will be an African Princess."

### HOPE OF AN ELDORADO

During the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars all this district was lost to France. The English seized the territory and occupied it for years. The Treaty of Paris restored to France the colonies she had as of January 1, 1792, and Colonel Julian Schmaltz received orders to take over these regions on May 18, 1816. The English refused to turn back Dakar and Gorée. The French colonel, thereupon, made his headquarters among the natives of Cape Vert. He sent a report to Paris that although the treaty gave France the right to occupy the Cape, he would need a strong force to put the pact into effect. Finally, in 1817 the English did restore these possessions to the French.

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Dakar still meant nothing to the world, but Cape Vert began to signify something to the French. To some Frenchmen it began to mean too much. France had been bled white by a quarter of a century of war; the national currency had lost most of its value. The economic life of the country was unbalanced and post-war depression gripped the people. The Government helped to found the *Société Coloniale Africaine*, which was to aid the home country regain its financial balance. The King of France gave his approval to the venture. Several scientists were selected to explore the possibilities of large-scale settlement. A gang of laborers and a detachment of soldiers accompanied them. Unfortunately, the expedition ran into tragedy. The flagship was shipwrecked, and many passengers lost their lives. Those who reached their goal found conditions atrocious. Several soldiers deserted; sickness took a heavy toll; chaos reigned. Only one person seemed to like the Cape, Sloop-Captain de Venancourt, commander of the war-sloop *Echo*. He wrote glowing reports to France, and they received wide publicity. They were the cause of the tragedy of *La Belle Alexandrine*.

Gullible persons were quick to believe in this mirage of an Eldorado. A country so distant exercised a fatal attraction upon people afflicted with post-war despair. A group

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of adventurers capitalized exaggerated hopes; they founded the *Société Coloniale Philanthropique*.

Desperate, Colonel Schmaltz tried to enlighten the public. "The Cape Vert peninsula," he insisted, "inhabited by 10,000 to 12,000 persons, has not enough to feed its own people. . . . On the entire peninsula there are only four houses, built in Dakar by the people of Gorée. It is impossible to live in tents and sheds during the rainy season. . . ."

Nonetheless, the vessel *La Belle Alexandrine*, chartered by the Philanthropic Colonial Society, set sail with 145 men, twenty women and ten children. In the new Eldorado of their imagination no provision whatever had been made to receive them, and none could have been made, since there was no timber for shacks, no food and certainly not enough water. The authorities refused to give the men permission to land; admitted only women and children. The male passengers were scattered: some of them moved to the British territory of Gambia, others to Saint-Louis, in Northern Senegal; still others returned home. Several of them died.

Again Dakar relapsed into utter insignificance. "On the entire peninsula," a colonial administrator wrote, "there is no well or running water, with the exception of the well at

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Hann. On the coast the water is brackish. The soil is sandy and the drought, lasting eight months, precludes the cultivation of anything but cotton. . . . There is not enough food even for the natives themselves."

The Governor of Gorée declared in 1823: "The Cape Vert does not promise to yield important colonial results." It was only years later that the first European building of any importance was built, a Catholic mission.

Although Dakar's name was scarcely ever mentioned in those days—if it was ever mentioned—conditions on the peninsula presented some problems to the French which had to be solved. One of them was shipwrecks. With the monsoon and *harmattan* at grips, the vapors of the steaming continent concealed the basalt rocks that jutted into a heavily traveled shipping lane. Upon them, boats flying many colors came to grief. The wrecks that were cast ashore became the natives' property. They often held the passengers and crew for ransom. Even in civilized parts of Europe it had been a lawful practice for owners of shore property to claim shipwrecks. At Dakar the natives had gone so far as to set up misleading lights to lure vessels to their doom.

The French had tried to put an end to this practice by paying small fees to rulers along the coast in order to

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avert such wrecks. They tried to enact treaties, but they were of no avail. The treaties they had concluded in the past had fallen into oblivion. The French were powerless to act against the natives to whom the Cape had reverted.

In those days the practice of looting wrecks received much notice in the Western world. The Seven Seas were then being cleaned up, and this was one of the first problems to be faced. It was not merely a matter of policing. The United States broke down Japan's isolation and opened her to the foreign world over just such an issue. There was grave danger that if the French failed to act quickly and severely in the Cape Vert region, another Power would be only too eager to take matters in hand.

The sea lane in front of Dakar was more important for the British than for any other country. It was their route to India and the Far East. They had lost many ships on the coast of the green peninsula. The natives looted the wrecks. Should the English Government protest to the black kings or to the French? Since the English were the greatest collectors of colonies, acquiring them all along the road to India, any sober sailor could see that Cape Vert was made to be owned by them. The very fact that the English had occupied this land twice before showed clearly that they were fully aware of its great importance.

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Those shipwrecked vessels would have been better pretexts for them to justify their occupation of the peninsula than any great Power ever needed. The French could not allow their adversary to hold such a trump.

The other problem was that of the slaves. On April 27, 1848, the French Republican Government which had been set up on the ruins of the monarchy of Louis Philippe, King of the French, decreed that all slaves in all French possessions must be freed. The French Government was then in the hands of people who were in a great hurry to translate their humanitarian ideas into decrees. They did not consider the consequence of such a measure upon a place like Gorée, a tiny dot in the expanse of the tropics, unknown to the outside world. Dakar was even less known than Gorée.

The emancipation of the slaves was a cruel blow to Gorée. What would happen to the respectable families whose fortunes had been made in the slave trade? How could they continue in business? Slavery had been abolished in all major countries except the United States. Should aristocrats lower themselves to smuggling human flesh into the American South?

The problem of the fugitive slaves could not be ignored

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either. The emancipation law could not apply to Dakar and the surrounding country, since this territory was not under effective French control. As a result, fugitive slaves began to knock at the doors of Gorée, which was actually held by the French. The owners of the slaves—Negroes themselves—demanded the return of the fugitives. The French saw the serious danger of alienating the sympathies of the black lords of the mainland.

The former slavers of Gorée had to branch out into other fields. The business of free Negroes was not coming to them as it should, since Gorée had a bad odor in black nostrils. The white inhabitants had not always been scrupulous in making a distinction between free and not free. Some of the free Negroes had been loaded on boats bound for America. Now the white people felt compelled to open up *comptoirs*, on the peninsula. Besides, Gorée was so barren that it could not be used for farming. On the mainland there was some potentially good soil.

The missionaries had taken another step in bringing France to the coast of West Africa. Headed by the pioneering Abbé Liebermann, several of them had proceeded into the interior of Senegal. King Louis Philippe's Minister of Marine and Colonies had told them: "Your sermons should be strong instruments in assuring and extending our in-

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fluence over the natives, introducing them to the benefactions of the Christian church."

The Minister had advised the provincial Governor to help the missionaries open classes for the native children's religious and moral instruction, also for their education in manual occupations and the use of agricultural implements. The missionaries were to be given the right to move freely in the interior, and they were placed on the payroll of the State. But the climate was too much for the missionaries, and attendance of their classes was inadequate. Abbé Liebermann thereupon decided to place their work on a new basis. He set up his headquarters at Gorée, where the climate was better, and visited the continent in order to recruit students. The most gifted young men were promised an education in Rome, whose atmosphere seemed to be more suitable to young Africans than France's.

### DAKAR UNDER THE SECOND EMPIRE

Dakar's history entered an entirely new phase when Napoleon III ascended the throne of France. He pursued a policy of prestige and colonial expansion. The *gloire* was to shine as brilliantly as in his immortal uncle's days. France was to enjoy the fruits of peace after so many



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revolutions. Trade was to thrive, new markets were to be opened and new sources of raw materials were to be made accessible; industry was to prosper. The scramble for glory and colonies began. The decision was taken to occupy Cape Vert.

Curiously, the contemporary documents contain no reference to Dakar's strategical importance. For this there may have been several reasons. The French may not have wished to advertise the importance of Dakar for fear that they might tip off the English, their rivals in those days. They may have been reticent in talking about this question because of the suspicion it would have aroused. Had the strategical importance of the peninsula been mentioned, people might have asked: "Against whom?" The obvious answer would have been: "Against the British." But Napoleon III was on excellent terms with the neighbors across the Channel. Besides, the language of diplomacy disliked such dangerous words as "strategical importance." It preferred to use a phrase like "saving human souls." In its more courageous moments it spoke of "markets" and "raw materials."

The Government of Napoleon III may have been unaware of Dakar's importance as a stepping stone between the Old and New Worlds, although this is by no means

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certain. The canny Emperor of the French may have been familiar with Dakar's significance. In a few years he was to send troops of occupation to Mexico. He cherished the hope of setting up a powerful Catholic monarchy in America. "A Mexican Empire was to put an end to the long period of political and social disorder which had afflicted the land of Montezuma," Blanchard Jerrold writes in *The Life of Napoleon the Third*, "to give France an important ally beyond the Atlantic, and to curb the restless ambitions of the United States." The seizure of Dakar may well have been part of the preparation for the Mexican *coup*.

While complete silence was maintained about Dakar as a key point on the great ocean highways to America and India, much was written in those days about the defensive value of the island of Gorée. As far back as 1816 Sloop-Captain M. de Venancourt wrote that the two breasts of the *Mamelles* should be fortified, along with the promontory known as the Point of Dakar. In his view, these forts would afford protection to the entire coast from Cape Manuel to Cape Bernard. Several other authorities agreed that Dakar must be fortified if Gorée was to be defended.

In appearance, therefore, the protection of the diminutive island of Gorée was the keynote of French policy on Cape Vert. That was the burden of the instructions Napoleon

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III's Minister, Admiral Hamelin, transmitted to Post-Captain Protet on January 29, 1857: "Gorée, exclusively a naval and military post . . . has no harbor of her own. Ships can anchor only in the roadstead between the island and the mainland. It is essential that the part of the continent flanking the port should be occupied. From that point Gorée obtains her lumber, water, meat and vegetables, which she herself cannot produce. . . . Dakar's trade is also growing and French tradesmen must be given protection. It is entirely inadequate as extended at present. Too many ships have been wrecked on that coast, and it happens too often that the natives plunder the French boats before the arrival of the authorities."

Without awaiting specific orders—acting upon his own authority—Captain Protet began building a fortified post to shelter a small garrison on the mainland. Work progressed satisfactorily, and even the native chiefs appeared satisfied with the plans. In the villages of the peninsula peace reigned; the natives were friendly.

### THE TRICOLOR OVER DAKAR

With much rejoicing the Mohammedan natives celebrated the great holiday of Ramadan, the last day of which

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was on May 25, 1857. It was on that day that Captain Protet brought the French warship *Jeanne d'Arc* into the harbor of Dakar and landed his marines. The natives were used to seeing white people mixing with them. Protet made his men parade, their colorful banners fluttering in the breeze. The natives thought that the French had come to celebrate the Mohammedan holiday. Protet had French flags distributed to the chiefs, who proudly hoisted them. It was thus that the French took over Dakar.

For the next half century the town's growth was slow and painful. The trouble was not with the natives, who continued to be friendly; they did not mind the French administration as long as it was not too insistent on ridding them of their vermin. But Dakar had to face strong competition, and she was a veritable pest-hole. Heavy interests were vested in other routes to South America and around the Cape of Good Hope. British firms from Cardiff, which held much of this trade under their control, had established themselves firmly on the Portuguese-owned Cape Verde Islands, at Saint-Vincent. That way between Europe and South America was a few miles shorter than the route via Dakar. More important, the islands had—and still have—an abundance of fruits, vegetables and early Spring produce, all of which are lacking in Dakar. On the other hand, the

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Spaniards had established themselves with their overseas lines on their own Canary Islands, at Las Palmas. Coal was much less expensive there than at Dakar.

Few people had the vision of Commander Pinet-Laprade of Gorée, who wrote in those days: "Dakar is the most convenient point to be the center of our possessions on the western coast of Africa. . . . Cape Vert is on the route both to the East Indies and to South America. It is the only maritime point France has over a distance of two thousand leagues between Gibraltar and the Cape of Good Hope. She has therefore great interest in making her serve as a place of refuge for merchant ships in wartime and a supply base for naval squadrons."

The French Government accepted the British and Spanish challenge and concluded an agreement with the *Compagnie de Navigation des Messageries Impariales* to initiate a fortnightly service between France and Brazil via Lisbon and Dakar. This would have been an auspicious beginning if the Imperial French Government had followed it up. But Dakar was a port only in name. Ships had to anchor in the open roadstead, which was neither comfortable nor safe, especially when the monsoon lashed the waves.

Much money was needed to build a real port at Dakar,

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and that the Imperial Government in Paris was not ready to spend. It was only six years after the occupation of the town that a larger appropriation was made for the building of the port. This was the very year—1863—when the French army marched into Mexico City, and the following year the French Emperor's protégé, Archduke Maximilian of Austria, entered the Mexican capital as Emperor—but not for long.

Dakar remained the despair of French colonial officials. The government clerk, Beranger Feraux, commented: "The streets are barely indicated. Around the port and barracks a few civilian houses are grouped without any plan or elegance." Curiously, the town's decline coincided with the fiasco of the Mexican expedition and the rise of the United States as a world Power after the war among the States. The decline was accentuated later by the opening of the Suez Canal.

Had it not been so infernally hot at Dakar, she might have been a veritable Siberian town to many French officials, who felt they had been banished into an uncouth world. None looked at the scene with greater contempt than the Chef d'Escadron of cavalry and Commandant of the district of Gorée, M. Canard, who hated the place and was so fascinated by it that he could not tear himself away, and

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stayed on and on. The entries of the diary he wrote in the seventies sound amusing today. The place just oozed with monotony, he complained. There was nothing, absolutely nothing to do. People did not work, if they could avoid it, and slept endless hours. There was no trade and no activity whatever, except for the *marchands de goutte*, liquor dealers. "There is always beef," Commandant Canard complained, "always beef, little mutton, no veal. Life is very difficult, very expensive, but not very agreeable. . . . The natives are always good-natured, but always extremely lazy. It is most difficult to make them work even by paying them well. Their greatest happiness is to sleep in the sun, make salaam, and to dance to the sound of the tam-tam."

### AFRICAN METROPOLIS

In the eighties of the last century life began to stir in Dakar. This was the era of the great French colonial expansion. Prussia had defeated France. Checkmated on the European continent, she had to spend her energies in another way. Chancellor Bismarck helped her find solace in colonies in which neither he nor the young German Empire had an interest in those days. It was then that the

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French Republic built up the colonial empire which turned out to be second only to Great Britain's.

If Dakar was to serve as the outlet of French West Africa to the sea, she had first to be connected with the interior. In 1882 the building of the first railway line began. The following year it reached the town of Rufisque, about a score of miles inland, and two years later it reached Saint-Louis, at the mouth of the Senegal River, 163 miles to the north. An even more ambitious project was undertaken when the railway builders began piercing into the deep hinterland of Dakar. They laid down tracks on the barren plain from Thies to Kayes, on the River Senegal. From there they crossed the northeastern ranges of the Gangaran Mountains, rich in streams and grazing land. They reached the mighty Niger River at Koulikoro, and now the way was open for penetration into the very heart of Africa. Only then did Dakar become the real export and import center of an endless hinterland.

In the last year of the nineteenth century work was begun on the naval base of Dakar, and the new jetty was built. Studies were begun for the building of the new commercial harbor. By the decree of October 1, 1902, the seat of government of French West Africa was transferred from Saint-Louis to Dakar. The population of Dakar was 1,556 in



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1878, 8,737 in 1891, and 18,447 in 1904. It was then that the schools—public, Catholic and Mohammedan—were opened; several weekly newspapers were published. In 1905 the first submarine cable was laid between Dakar and France, with its northern terminus in the city of Brest. The isolation of Cape Vert was now definitely broken. More cables were laid, to Cadiz in Spain, to Pernambuco in Brazil, and to Konakri, the capital of French Guinea, farther south on the African coast.

During the First World War Dakar was the great transshipment station of French West Africa. She received strong, healthy, young black men for the Allied forces in Europe and got back weak, wounded, broken black men. Their dead were buried on the French battlefields. Dakar also received vegetable oils and many other tropical products to be consigned to France and England. She was a naval base, refueling and repair station for Allied ships. The Germans had only occasional raiders, but no regular battle front in the South Atlantic. Dakar grew more important than ever before in the South American trade.

After the First World War Dakar began to grow by leaps and bounds. The more she became the great tropical metropolis, the more she eclipsed the other ports of French West Africa. Her former rivals, Saint-Louis and Rufisque,

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became her shadows. Dakar was *hors de concours*, without competition. Her population was approaching the 75,000 mark.

## THE NEW ORDER IN DAKAR

In the Second World War France was cast again for an important part. Now Dakar could accommodate even the biggest battleships. Senegalese soldiers were loaded on big transports; vegetable oils and tropical products were shipped to France. The methods of the First World War were to be continued in the Second. The French Rip Van Winkle was awake and rubbing his eyes, but failed to see the change.

After the lightning-like defeat of France, Article XVIII of the Franco-German Armistice gave the Germans the right to occupy all airports in French colonial territory. The so-called Vichy Government of France declared that one Italian and two German members of the disarmament commission had arrived at Dakar and departed the following day. But the captain of the Polish steamer *Rozewie*, which arrived at Boston toward the middle of October, 1940, asserted that his ship had slipped out of Dakar "which had been in German hands since early in July."

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A few days before, the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa, Colonel Larminat, charged that he had documentary evidence to prove that the Germans were and had been giving orders at Dakar.

What was public opinion in Dakar after the armistice? Was it in favor of the unconditional surrender of the government of Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain or did it support the Free French movement of General Charles de Gaulle? Personal investigation among people who were at Dakar at that time produced the following facts:

Public opinion in the capital of French West Africa is not confined entirely to the white French and foreign inhabitants. The natives of Dakar and of the three other communities enjoying citizenship rights often pride themselves on their efforts to obtain some light on questions of public interest. While they can be easily swayed and deceived, they are not entirely passive.

Among the first contingents of repatriated native soldiers public sentiment was strongly against the Germans and the New Order in France. The Senegalese soldiers had been shamed and humiliated by the Germans, who detested *die Schwarzen*, the black ones. One of the most vocally advertised grievances of the Third Reich has always been *die Schande am Rhein*, the presence of colored soldiers

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on the French side of the Rhine, Germany's national river. For long Nazi propaganda has been hammering away at the point that France was an extension of Black Africa into Europe, and that she was polluting the continent. The master race drew the color line, and clamored about its own purity.

The African soldiers had found that many leaders of the French New Order were doing likewise. They were so saturated with Nazi propaganda that they openly showed their disdain for the Senegalese. This the black *poilus* felt all the more keenly because they had been the pampered darlings of the French public. The demobilized soldiers were not silent about their experiences in Europe. All they wanted was a chance to lay their hands on the Nazi and *les nouveaux messieurs* of the Marshal.

As to the white residents of Dakar, "consternation" is a mild word to describe their feelings. They were simply dazed. Constantly surrounded by the signs of French greatness, they refused to believe that the *débâcle* could be true. When they did begin to realize the import of events, their reactions were quick. They were trapped in a country which white men can take only in small doses. To many the main attraction of the tropics was the blessed vacation far away from it. They suffered and sweated blood so as

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to enjoy life under the serene sky of their homeland all the more. They found that they were doomed to live in Africa indefinitely.

Their tragedy as Frenchmen was just as great. They had believed that their country could not be defeated, no matter what happened on the Rhine. The enemy could take Paris, perhaps even Bordeaux, but he could not take France, which was eternal, with no beginning and no end. France lived on all continents and was invulnerable. They had never had the least doubt that if worst came to worst their country would fight in Africa.

When the new rulers of France threw away their arms, the French inhabitants of Dakar were dismayed. That would have been the psychological moment for the Free French forces of General de Gaulle to strike. It would have also been the moment for the British. The Governor General of French West Africa, Pierre Boisson, indicated himself that his colony wanted to fight the Nazis. Neither the Free French nor the British took advantage of this opportunity, and they have been overwhelmed with blame. In their favor it must be said that all energies of Great Britain were summoned to resist the invasion which was imminent just then, and the Free French could not have acted without

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English help. Dakar may have been important, but the survival of Great Britain was even more imperative.

The New Order of France acquired momentum, developed its own myth and vested interests. It had the benefit of the Germans' organizing genius and the Nazis' abysmal dishonesty. Its propaganda received its cues from Berlin's Wilhelmstrasse, than which there is no street in all the world more notable for mendacity. Governor General Boisson decided that duty compelled him to follow the orders of the established government at Vichy. Many French people at Dakar could not share his views, but public opinion in the colonial capital was no longer unanimous.

After the first fears of invasion had subsided, the British decided to act at the key point of the South Atlantic. On July 8, 1940, they sent an ultimatum to the commander of the French naval units at Dakar either to surrender or to join the Free French forces. Receiving no satisfactory answer, they caused a series of explosions near the stern of the 35,000 ton battleship *Richelieu*, which damaged her propellers. Similar ultimatums were sent to French commanders of the naval units at Mers-el-Kabir, near Oran, in Algeria, and at Alexandria, the principal port of Egypt.

Late in August the Governor of Chad Colony, Colonel Larminat, declared himself for the Free French. The Gov-

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ernors of the other provinces of French Equatorial Africa followed his example. Only Libreville, the capital of the colony of Gabun, did not follow suit. Realizing the danger inherent in the break-up of its colonial empire, the Vichy Government exerted strong pressure on Governor General Boisson, who now went so far in atoning for the dangerous thoughts he had entertained in the past as to conceive the plan of an armed attack on Gambia, the British wedge in French Senegal. Boisson's plan turned out to be a failure; his heart may not have been in the job. Several French army officers slipped out of Dakar and joined the British in Gambia. This depleted the number of active Free French sympathizers in West Africa.

### DAKAR IS SHELLED

Early in September it was announced that six French warships had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar: three cruisers and three destroyers. They had come from Toulon, the French Mediterranean port, and turned south after passing the narrows. Since they had been unchallenged by the British defenders, it was assumed that their voyage had been arranged between the Vichy and London authori-

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ties. The obvious conclusion was that the British let the French ships pass so as to help them reach safety at colonial points. Evidently, the vessels had been in danger in Toulon of being taken over by the Germans. In the face of this menace the English and French were seen moving closer.

When more details became known, it was learned that one of the French cruisers which put in at Dakar, the *Georges Leygues*, had brought ammunition for the disabled battleship *Richelieu*. She had also returned her propellers, which the Germans had taken away, and some spare parts. This did not bode so well for Franco-British friendship. A few days later it became definitely known that no agreement had been reached between the British and French about the passing of the warships, and that they had not left Toulon to escape the Germans. Now it was assumed that they had left port in agreement, perhaps in accordance, with instructions of the Germans. It became clear that the ships might be used against England. With their arrival at Dakar, the balance in favor of the Vichy forces turned even more favorable.

"The whole situation at Dakar," Prime Minister Churchill said in the House of Commons on October 8th, speaking about this incident, "was transformed in a most unfavorable manner by the arrival there of three French



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cruisers and three destroyers which carried with them a number of Vichy partisans, evidently of a most bitter type. These partisans were sent to overawe the population, to grip the defenses, and to see to the efficient manning of the powerful shore batteries. The policy which His Majesty's Government had been pursuing toward the French warships was not to interfere with them unless they appeared to be proceeding to enemy-controlled ports. . . . By a series of accidents and some errors which have been made the subject of disciplinary action or are now subject of formal inquiry, neither the First Sea Lord nor the Cabinet was informed of the approach of these ships to the Straits of Gibraltar until it was too late to stop them passing through."

Monday afternoon, September 23, 1940, two British battleships, H.M.S. *Barham*, 31,000 tons, and H.M.S. *Resolution*, 29,150 tons, four cruisers, six destroyers and several Free French and English transports arrived before Dakar. Some of the warships were of French origin. The squadron carried a force which Dakar authorities estimated at 8,000 to 10,000 men.

At the same time two planes of the Free French landed at the Ouakam airport of Dakar, on the outskirts of the city. Their crews made an attempt to persuade the garrison

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to join the forces of General de Gaulle, but they were arrested. One of the prisoners had a list with him of de Gaulle sympathizers at Dakar and of the objectives of the attack. The list included the names of the mayor, members of the City Council, president of the Chamber of Commerce, and secretary of the Socialist Party of Dakar. They were all ordered to be taken into custody by the Governor General.

The same afternoon two launches left the side of the Free French warship *Savorgnan de Brazza*. The first carried a group of officers under the command of a naval chaplain, Captain G. Thierry d'Argenlieu, a priest in civilian life. The second launch carried a group of non-coms and sailors. Both groups were unarmed. Both launches displayed the white flag forward and the tricolor aft. The officers carried an ultimatum to be handed to the Governor General to surrender the town. On shore the occupants of the launches were received by officers, who hesitated between being very friendly and very unfriendly. They were given the ultimatum and the occupants of the launches made ready to go when a message arrived from the Governor General to arrest the chaplain's party. The officers and crew jumped into their launches and made an effort to reach their mother-ship. A pursuit began, in the course of

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which they were shot at, and their commander was wounded.

As to what followed, there are now three versions: the British-Free French, the Vichy French and the eyewitness account of a Spanish republican. According to the first version, shore batteries and the 12-inch guns of the *Richelieu* started blazing away at the war-vessels. The admiral commanding the British-Free French forces made the following signal in plain language: "Will be compelled to return fire unless your fire ceases." When it did not cease, he fired on the shore batteries and the defending warships. The battle for Dakar was on.

According to the Vichy-French account, the shelling of Dakar started as soon as the Governor General's negative reply had been received. The native hospital and several villas were hit. De Gaulle made several attempts during the night from Monday to Tuesday to invade the Cape Vert peninsula by landing some of his forces at Rufisque Beach, twenty-one miles from Dakar in an easterly direction. At five o'clock in the morning, a supplementary neutral account says, Lieutenant Boislambert of the Free French forces drew his revolver at the colonel in command of the coastal batteries at Rufisque and took charge to await de Gaulle. When he failed to arrive the lieutenant fled.

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It was during the same night, the Vichy report says, that the British Admiral commanding the Allied forces before Dakar delivered an ultimatum to the effect that if the city was not surrendered by six o'clock Tuesday morning he would be obliged to attack with all his forces, that Dakar's fortifications would be destroyed and the city occupied by British troops. The Governor General replied: "France has placed Dakar in my care and I shall defend her to the end." Tuesday morning, September 24th, the cannonading was resumed.

The third version comes from Juan S. Vidarte, the Spanish republican, who stayed at Dakar when the invasion was attempted. He described his experiences in the February 22, 1941, issue of *The Nation*. The British-French forces attempted to land their troops, according to him, but the powerful guns of the *Richelieu* blocked the way. The following day the British began shelling the city. About eleven o'clock in the morning an exodus of biblical proportions began. After a brief let-up, British air and naval forces resumed the attack at noon. The *Richelieu* and another French warship were struck. The Allies lost two airplanes in the attack on the port, and three more planes over the Dakar airdrome. On the third day the British bombarded the city again. De Gaulle made a strong per-

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sonal plea. The *Richelieu* fired back. Then, suddenly, the Allied forces drew away, abandoning the attack to take Dakar. They announced that rather than enter serious war-like operations against Frenchmen who had felt it their duty to obey commands of the Vichy Government they would give up the fight. "When the Vichy men at Dakar were on the point of surrender," Vidarte writes, "the British squadron sailed away." A few hours more would have seen the end of resistance.

For two successive days Vichy-French airplanes flew over Gibraltar, giving it its worst raids, as an answer to Dakar.

A post-mortem was held over the Dakar fiasco. Prime Minister Churchill declared in his speech to the House of Commons on October 8: "This operation was primarily French and although we were ready to give it a measure of support, which in certain circumstances might have been decisive, we were no more anxious than was General de Gaulle to get involved in a lengthy or sanguinary conflict with the Vichy Government. . . ."

The hostilities at Dakar were still in progress when the Ministry of Information in London issued the following communiqué:

"General de Gaulle had good reason to believe from information which reached him that a large portion of

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the French population of Senegal supported the Free French Government and would welcome his arrival and that a similar situation might be established there to that which exists in French Equatorial Africa."

Looking for a scapegoat, the more sensational English press fell on Brig. Gen. E. L. Spears, liaison officer between the British and de Gaulle, who was said to have persuaded Churchill to back the undertaking.

About a month after the Battle of Dakar, General Maxime Weygand was given charge of all French military and political affairs in Africa. His position was compared to that of a Roman proconsul. In Dakar, martial law had been declared, many arrests had been made and the municipal authorities had been dismissed.

In a court martial at Clermont-Ferrand, the surface quiet in the capital of French West Africa was shown to be misleading. Among the accused was Lieutenant Jean Montezer of the colonial artillery, described in the indictment as an officer of great intelligence, familiar with the Moslem ways. He was accused of having organized a secret society with the object of surrendering Dakar to the Free French. More specifically he was accused of having sent a native named Beye Mokear to a woman, Rosa Hakier, asking for information about French naval units in Dakar harbor.

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The court found Lieutenant Montezer guilty and sentenced him to death. Since he had fled to British territory, the sentence was executed in absentia.

## CRISIS IN THE ATLANTIC

The chronological record of events connected with Dakar after the attempted invasion reveals constant tension at this key point of the South Atlantic.

The State Department of the United States announced on November 8, 1940, the appointment of Christian K. Nielson as consular agent at Freetown, seaport of Sierra Leone, the British enclave in French West Africa. "The appointment was regarded in diplomatic circles," noted the *New York Times*, "as proof of the Government's perturbation about the situation at Dakar, which is regarded by many tactical experts as a logical starting place for an aerial or naval attack on South America." Freetown has been considered an acceptable base for naval operations.

A significant item was published in the Hungarian Government newspaper, *Magyarország*, of Budapest, on October 9th. It was noteworthy because the Hungarian press publishes nothing unless it is approved by the Germans, and also because the Reich Propaganda Ministry sometimes

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employs Budapest newspapers for the publication of items it does not want to have printed in Germany. Such trial balloons are meant to test reactions at home and abroad. This particular dispatch said that an agreement was being negotiated between Berlin and Vichy to give the Germans the right of transit across all French colonies and mandated territories. Furthermore, it was to give the Reich the right to send troops to Dakar "to prevent a possible American landing there."

The Vichy representative in Paris, Fernand de Brinon, who performed ministerial functions with the German occupation authorities, said on May 10, 1941, according to a Berne despatch to the *New York Times* that if the United States decided to occupy Dakar it must do so by force of arms because "France still possesses a fighting navy fully capable of defending French interests wherever they may be."

On May 16th the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies urged President Franklin D. Roosevelt, first, to announce that the United States would not permit direct or indirect control of Dakar, the Azores, the Cape Verde and the Canary Islands by the Axis Powers and, second, if it became clear that German control or occupation of these territories was imminent, the Government of the United



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States should establish protective occupation of them in co-operation with the British until such time as the threat has passed and these territories could be safely returned to their rightful owners.

The following day Senator Claude Pepper of Florida predicted after a conference with President Roosevelt, according to the *New York Times*, that Germany would try to obtain Dakar and eventually use it in operations against South America. "I have no doubt," the Senator said, "that Hitler intends to occupy Dakar, either by force or in collaboration with the French. I think he will make his first attack on us from Dakar through South America. It is foolish, it is worse than folly for us to allow him to occupy these strategic areas. He will be taking them to strike at the enemy; and who is the enemy but us?"

On May 22nd the *New York Times* reported from Washington:

"France is rapidly augmenting the defenses of its strategic South Atlantic naval bases at Dakar, presumably as a precaution against attack by the United States, Great Britain or Germany. Reliable information reaching the capital indicates that the permanent defenses of Cape Manuel, just south of the harbor, already have been strengthened. Several new guns have already been mounted on

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the island of Gorée. The anti-aircraft defenses of Gorée, never very strong, have also been improved. . . . Latest reports indicate that there were fewer than a hundred aircraft at the airport nearly two miles from Dakar. Most of them were bombers and many of them were obsolescent. The French garrison at Dakar amounts to about 5,000 men, including one anti-aircraft battalion. Nothing is known here of the troops' equipment. Units of the French navy that went to Dakar after the German victory are still there. These are believed to be France's most modern battleship, the *Richelieu* . . . the cruisers *Georges Leygues*, *Montcalm*, *Gloire*, either two or three destroyers and submarines."

Reports from London on the same day stated that both Dakar and Gorée bristled with guns. German commercial planes were said to be making regular trips to South America. It was feared that the Nazis had thus found a way to obtain strategic raw materials by circumventing the blockade.

De Gaullist sources reported toward the end of May unusual activity at Dakar. The garrison had been strengthened by more than 5,000 troops during the last few months. Vessels in convoy had brought heavy and light field artillery, and a large number of planes was expected from

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Morocco. Boats sometimes returned from Dakar to an unnamed port no more than twelve hours after their arrival, sailing in ballast, although large quantities of sorely needed colonial products were awaiting shipment to unoccupied France.

Desertions from the Vichy forces in the Dakar neighborhood continued, a despatch from Berne reported to the *New York Times* on May 29th. They reached such a point in the aviation forces that when a pursuit plane or light bomber was sent up for exercise or reconnaissance duty it was allowed to take only enough gasoline to keep aloft the minimum necessary time. Another source of worry to Dakar authorities was said to be the desertions of frontier patrols, which allowed themselves to be captured after little or no resistance and in most cases failed to destroy their automatic weapons. The drain on the Dakar arsenals was said already to have reached serious proportions. The dissatisfaction was reported to have been further heightened by the return of the German armistice commission, one member of which was reported to have made the mistake of attempting to deliver a "pep talk" to some of the garrison. He was hooted down, and disciplinary measures were taken against the men involved.

The United States began to loom large in the fears of

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the German-financed Paris press. "As soon as it deems the moment propitious," wrote *Nouveaux Temps* in an editorial on August 8th, "the United States will not hesitate to turn from unrestrained words to unrestrained deeds. On that day French West Africa, Dakar and Morocco will be in danger. Unless full and close Franco-German collaboration replaces the strict régime of the armistice, we shall have to face this menace alone with our fatally inadequate means."

Newspapers in the United States and Britain reported rumors about the intensification of pressure by the Germans on Dakar. According to one account, Theodor Habicht, sometimes referred to as "Hitler's Minister of Terror," also as "Minister for the Fifth Column," had been sent to Dakar to prepare the *pénétration pacifique* of French West Africa. Habicht's name was widely known at the time of the Austrian troubles when he was in charge of Nazi terrorism.

The Governor General of French West Africa, on the other hand, issued an official denial that there was any German infiltration into Senegal territory. He stated that there was not a single German in all French West Africa, not even an armistice commission. Coincidentally, *Le Petit Parisien* reported from Tangier on August 20th that mili-

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tary engineers were increasing the strength of the coastal batteries in and around Dakar.

Meanwhile British losses in the Atlantic were climbing. Writing a first-hand account of his observations with a British convoy, Craig Thompson of the *New York Times* suggested that the Germans had a base of naval operations in the vicinity of the Azores, the Canary Islands and possibly Dakar.

Mysterious American tourists were seen infiltrating into French African territories, including the Dakar region, by the German-controlled press of Paris. A grave menace threatened Dakar because of large concentrations of "American tourists," *Paris-Soir* warned. It represented the Americans as manifesting great interest in the Trans-Saharan Railway. American engineers and troops were fortifying a base at Freetown in the British territory of Sierra Leone, not far from Dakar, *Paris-Midi* reported in a roundabout way from Stockholm. The Vichy Government approved the appropriation of 128,000,000 francs for work on the naval base at Dakar and its overland communication with the Mediterranean, the *New York Times* reported on September 5th. As the tropical rainy season of 1941 was drawing to its close, Dakar appeared in the press more and more often.



### III. *Dakar's Vast Hinterland*

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#### THE DARK CONTINENT

THE VAST COUNTRY, French West Africa, of which Dakar is the capital, is eight times as large as France was before her defeat—1,816,000 square miles, and has an estimated population of 15,000,000, about one-third of that of France.

*Afrique Occidentale Française*, A. O. F., is the largest territory in all Africa. In the north it blends into Algeria, considered an integral part of France and not a colony. In the far northeast it touches Libya, Italy's big desert colony. In the east, A. O. F. has an arbitrary frontier with French Equatorial Africa, the least populous and the least developed of French possessions in the western part of Africa.

French West Africa occupies the bulk of the vast pro-

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tubercance that lends the northern part of the continent its bulbous shape. This is the gigantic waistline extending from Cape Vert peninsula—with Dakar on it—in the west to the Gulf of Aden in the east. It is this massive promontory which pushes Dakar so close to South America, giving this region its unique strategical position.

The map reveals a remarkably dappled coastline, which is in contrast to the solid coloring of the interior. It shows most vividly that France shares the "bulge" with several other colonial powers. It also shows that those other powers have the advantage over France in good locations, with the one exception of Dakar, which is better than the best of the other sites. France shares a large part of the coastline with Spain, Portugal and Great Britain. On the coast of the northern desert country Spain nominally owns the colony of Rio de Oro. As a matter of fact, it is the lawless desert tribes that own this land, and Spanish sentinels never venture beyond sight of their fortified posts. This colony is the hinterland of the smaller but much more valuable Canary Islands.

South of Dakar lies the diminutive British colony of Gambia, with the adjoining protectorate along the river of the same name. A few scores of miles away is Portuguese Guinea, known to transatlantic travelers as the jumping-

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off place of clippers on their Winter trips westbound. A short airplane trip southeast takes us into another British colony and protectorate, Sierra Leone, famed for her palm oil and tropical fauna. Adjoining it is the Republic of Liberia, which America helped to found and to preserve as a haven for Negroes.

Across the French Ivory Coast we reach still another British colony, the Gold Coast, known for its gold no less than for its manganese and kola-nuts. Next to it is Togoland, which belonged to Germany until the end of the First World War. It was divided between the French and English at the Peace Conference, the French getting the larger slice. This part of the Gulf of Guinea is known as the Slave Coast, and here is Dahomey, a part of the A. O. F. Beyond it is Nigeria, the most important and richest of English possessions in these parts, extending northeast all the way to Lake Chad.

Important fresh waterways further enhance the value of these colonies. Gambia is nothing else but the lower reaches of the river, with a few miles of right of way on both banks. Portuguese Guinea leans heavily on the Rio Grande. The importance of the Gold Coast is greater because of the Volta River. The name of Nigeria indicates



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clearly to what extent that British territory is dependent upon the greatest river of northwestern Africa.

Between these earlier colonies the French fill out the gaps, just as they have filled out the hinterland. Although they were among the first settlers, they were the last colonizers. The best sites had already been occupied by earlier comers who had concentrated on the best investments. Their part of Africa was too dark in those days to attract white people.

Nearly all of French West Africa lies in the tropics, but it does not reach the Equator anywhere. It consists of three types of regions that can be clearly distinguished. In the south it is mostly tropical forest, interspersed with swamps and other "bad lands." In the center—which is the core of the colony—the dominant type of land is the savannah. This is the land of the peanut and of native cotton. It is the great grass country, with occasional clumps of trees. The northern region of the savannah is the *sahel*, where the grass is intruded upon by steppes and sand. This is the country of the acacia and baobab trees. This is also the land of cattle-breeding.

The third and topmost layer is the desert. Moving northward the vegetation gets stunted, as if one were climbing

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a high mountain near the timberline. Beyond this point there is only desolation.

## THE EIGHT COLONIES

French West Africa consists of eight colonies. One of them is the "Circonscription of Dakar and Dependencies." Geographically, Dakar is situated in the colony of Senegal, but administratively she has a different status. Best known of all the colonies is Senegal because of the strapping Senegalese soldiers she gave to France. It is one of the smallest colonies with a population of only 1,670,000. Its capital is not Dakar—the largest and by far the most important city—but Saint-Louis, in the estuary of the Senegal River.

The largest of the eight colonies is the French Sudan, and her population of 3,600,000 is also one of the largest. It is not to be confused with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, at the opposite end of Africa, along the Nile. The capital of French Sudan is Bamako, on the Niger River. It was the eastern terminus of the Dakar-Niger railway before it was extended to Koulikoro.

French Guinea, with a population of 2,200,000, is

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wedged in between Portuguese Guinea and British Sierra Leone, at the great bend of the African continent, where the shore turns southeastward. Her capital is Konakri, a banana and rubber harbor, with an important railway line into the interior.

This colony adjoins the Ivory Coast, which is a typical colony of the forest belt, and the most highly populated one as well (4,000,000). Her capital is Abidjan, a timber, coffee and cocoa port, with a long railway line running straight northward, tapping the rich jungle area.

Beyond England's Gold Coast is the colony of Dahomey, with a population of 1,140,000. The chief town of this colony of French West Africa is Porto Novo, another seaport, which sends abroad some cotton and a lot of kapok, used for mattresses, oil and soap.

Although the Niger colony (which is not to be confused with Nigeria) is one of the largest in A. O. F., it has a population of only 1,200,000, because it stretches into the heart of the central Sahara desert. On the other hand, the southern tier of this colony is real savannah country. Her capital is Niamey on the Niger.

The last colony is Mauretania, which has the smallest population—only 350,000. It is the real Sahara. Although it has a long coastline, sand-bars barricade it so effectively,

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that it is virtually worthless. Mauretania has no principal town of its own; in fact, it hasn't anything resembling a town, unless villages of tents can be dignified with the name. Its Governor resides in the chief town of Senegal, Saint-Louis.

The coastline of West Africa is straight and flat, with hardly an indentation. The eye can distinguish no mark whatever for hundreds of miles. A narrow bar of sand runs parallel to the coast, looking like New York's Fire Island in the Atlantic Ocean. This bar is half submerged at the entrance into the protected gulf of Cape Vert because of ocean currents sweeping past the promontory of the continent. Dakar owes her good fortune to these currents.

South of Dakar the coastline is somewhat more broken up by the estuaries of the tropical rivers, indicating that we are out of the dry zone and in the region of the heavy summer rains. Geologists tell us that this part of the continent tilts northeastward, and that is why rivers are so scarce in this country of torrential rains. The torrid dry zone, into which the streams flow, sucks up the water of all but the mightiest streams.

All four corners of Africa have great rivers. The Nile, the Zambesi and the Congo are the dominant streams of the three other corners. The greatest river of the West

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African bulge is the Niger. It means "Mother of Waters" in the Batta tongue. "Nile of the French" this stream was often called. The Niger was actually thought to be a branch of the Nile for many years. At any rate, this vast body of water means almost as much to the natives as the Nile does to the Egyptians, and could even mean more.

The Niger may be two rivers, and not one, in some experts' views. This is indicated by the giant horseshoe of its flow, which encloses the famous "bend." Originally, one of the rivers seems to have flowed north into the Mediterranean, and the other south into the Gulf of Guinea. When the Sahara began to dry up, the north-bound river was prevented from breaking through the sand, folded back and poured its water into the south-bound river. The same fate befell several other African streams. That other giant, the Congo, also starts north, only to turn south. The Nile, however, was strong enough to crash the desert gates, swollen with the vast reservoir collected from the Blue Nile.

As the coastline turns eastward, flanking the Gulf of Guinea, it is fringed with lagoons behind the bars of sand. Most of the coast is inaccessible to boats of the larger type. That is why this part of Africa remained a mystery for so many years.

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Unlike the Niger, the Senegal is an all-French river. It is formed by the union of two streams, the Bakhoy, White River, and Bafing, Black River. They unite at Bafulabé, which means "meeting of the waters," and it is only from then on that the river is known as the Senegal. It is navigable only up to Kayes, about 300 miles from the sea. The river sends off many rivulets, the *marigots*, which usually end in swamps. Although the Senegal gets most of its water from the forest zone, where rains are heavy, the evaporation is so great in this climate that the supply of water sometimes thins into a trickle. The excess of the rainy season is stored up in dams for the dry spells.

Climate is the main problem of French West Africa, as it is of her capital, Dakar. Nowhere does it encourage the settlement of the white man. In the north it is extremely dry, while in the south it is excessively wet. The farther north we move the longer is the dry season. Differences are extreme, even in the rainy belt. The annual rainfall at Saint-Louis on the Senegal is 423 mm., while at Konakri, in the French Guinea, only 500 miles away, it is more than ten times as much, 4430 mm. There are two rainy seasons in this region, from March to July, and from September to December. There are only three months each year of dry weather.

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### BAOBABS AND PALMS

Taking each of the colonies in more detail, we must tarry in Senegal, the hinterland of Dakar. She is mostly arid, except for the river valleys, which are fertile. Her mountains are of granite and porphyry, but red sandstone and clay are also prevalent. Senegal is shot through with iron, people say. But it has not been proved, nor would it matter much because ore must have cheap waterways for transportation.

The baobab is the most characteristic tree of this colony, and it is a godsend to the natives because it can be eaten, drunk and even worn. Its gourdlike fruit, "monkey-bread," has a pleasantly acid taste. The tree can also be tapped for a beverage. The natives treat its bark and obtain clothes and ropes. It can also be used as paper, but that is of little interest to the Negroes. The baobab is Africa's giant tree, having sometimes a diameter of thirty-four feet and a circumference of one hundred and four feet.

Oil palms are very important in this colony, and their product is an important export article. The *ronier* palm tree is particularly valued because it resists insects and moisture. The *Acacia Senegalensis* yields gum, which was

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once the great export article of this region. The native usually waits for the hot winds to sear the bark, which cracks open, and the gum escapes. Or he "bleeds" the trees in the winter months, but he does this with little regard for their health.

The most important product of all Senegal and of all French West Africa is the peanut. "Peanuts will save the country," Governor Protet, the great colonial administrator, said years ago, and it is possible that peanuts have really saved it. About one half of the total exports of A. O. F. was peanuts in 1935, a fairly normal year. The value of peanut exports is about eight times that of the gold exports, and twenty times as high as cotton. Senegal alone exports more of this product than any other country. She has now outdistanced India, which was her rival for many years.

France took to peanuts some years ago and changed the solemn name of *arachides* to the less formal *cacahuètes*. The popularity of peanuts is attested by the many names given them, of which ground-nut, monkey-nut, manilla-nut, earth-nut, *pistache de terre* and goober are just a few. It is recorded that in the first year of their life in America the Pilgrim Fathers "were enforced to live on ground-nuts." It has also been said that the only reason peanuts are today



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less important than potatoes is because potatoes were first in the field. The peanut is one of America's national delicacies, as can be seen by a glance at the floors of railroad trains, athletic grandstands and wherever crowds gather. It is becoming increasingly popular as butter and oil for food—a substitute for olive oil. Its "good straw" serves as fodder, and its "bad straw" as roofing for native huts. It is also valuable for glycerine, explosives and lubricating oil.

Although Senegal is today the largest producer of the peanut, it is not native to her. A Portuguese slave-trader first introduced it from America. The natives did not like it, thought it required too much work. They sowed a few handfuls of seeds around their *cases*, dug up the pods when ripe and ate them without roasting.

Senegal is an ideal place for the production of peanuts. Three conditions are essential for their growth: temperature that never sinks too low, ample rains for seeds and leaves, light and loose soil. Senegal has all three.

When the first rains fall the Negro farmer takes his horseshoe blade attached to a long handle, called the *hilaire* because of its inventor, Hilaire Maurel, and turns over the soil. When the soil is sufficiently moist, he sows the seeds in small holes about three to five centimeters deep, spaced about forty centimeters apart. He has little to do until

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harvest time. When the rains are over the pods are ripe. The peanut has been called the lazy cultivators' fruit.

### COTTON, RUBBER AND COCOA

Senegal adjoins French Guinea in the south. It is the country of the tangled Futa-Djallon Mountains, from which both the Senegal and Niger Rivers spring. Characteristically tropical country, it abounds in mangrove trees, leopards, crocodiles, serpents, egrets and marabouts. A mere enumeration of her many products should make "have-not" nations even more covetous. She produces rubber and cotton, coffee and banana, palm oil and gum, orange and lemon, the ubiquitous baobab and the shea butter tree, the karite.

There was a time when rubber was the great money-maker of the natives whom ethnographers dubbed "the most typical Negroes." When the black man needed ready cash he went into the nearest forest and "bled" a woolly climber that furnishes the milky liquid—latex—out of which rubber is made. He took the stuff to the nearest *comptoir* and sold it for one-tenth of its current price. Then he went home and had a good time until he needed money again. He was rich, as wealth is understood among the Negroes of West Africa.

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At the beginning of this century Africa produced fully one-third of the world supply of rubber—15,500 tons out of a total of 44,000. The largest producer was then the Amazon valley of Brazil, with 26,000 tons. The East contributed no more than a paltry 820 tons. Brazil led the field because the best latex was found in the tree called *Hevea brasiliensis*, a native of the Amazon. This latex contained about 90 percent of caoutchouc of excellent quality. The available supply was sufficient as long as rubber was needed for erasers and children's balls.

When the motor car made its appearance, Nature's processes had to be speeded up. In certain parts of the East conditions were more ideal for the production of the Brazilian tree than in Brazil itself. The climate seemed to have been made to order. An abundance of labor was available of the best quality—indefatigable and cheap. Transportation was less expensive than in Brazil, where costly land connections had to be maintained. Nature was not left to its own devices in the Netherland Indies, Malaya and Ceylon but compelled to accomplish the task that man expected of it. Large plantations were laid out and the best type of seed was selected.

The world production of rubber is today 3,000,000 tons, nearly all of which is produced in the neighborhood

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of the South China Sea. Africa still produces 16,000 tons of rubber a year, as she did forty years ago. The primitive ways of the natives cannot compete with the high-efficiency plantation methods. Formerly prosperous French Guinea, once the richest region of French West Africa, has been ruined. Efforts have been made to recapture at least a part of the market, but the difficulties are insurmountable. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in rubber. It is virtually a world-wide monopoly, and the prices of the large producers are governed by an international agreement.

Modern rubber plantations require more work than the natives in the African tropics can be expected to perform. The land must be cleared of weed and growth, sometimes even walls have to be built around the hills to prevent the loss of top soil. Drains are constructed and manures added. The planter waits at least five full years before he can tap the tree. This operation is performed with the greatest care. The passes cut into the latex tubes must be neither too deep nor superficial. It requires skill and practice to cut the tree within one-twentieth of an inch of the wood. Nor has the transportation problem been solved in French Guinea, although the colonial government built a railway line from the port of Konakri to Kankan, far

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in the interior. It is the third longest of all French-African railroad lines, meant to be the great rubber highway. But Konakri herself has remained an inferior port.

The French colony of the Ivory Coast supplies most of the second-largest export article of French West Africa, cocoa. The natives grow the *forastero* variety, which is hardy and yields well. They use the seeds straight from the pod, plant them an average of fifteen feet apart and protect the soil from sun-glare with huge shade-trees. They cut the pods on the higher branches with a knife at the end of a long pole. They slash the pods open with a cutlass and scoop out the beans. Then the natives cover the beans with a heliotrope pulp, which they allow to ferment for about a week. Fermentation produces an acetic acid which transmits a certain flavor to the bean. The natives then dry the beans by exposing them to the sun on cement or brick floors or on wooden platforms.

Cocoa is big business, but French West Africa does not take advantage of all her opportunities. The Ivory Coast produces no more than 1.4 percent of the world output of cocoa beans, while her next-door neighbor, British-controlled Gold Coast, produces nearly one half, and the other British-controlled territory near by, Nigeria, produces an additional 8 percent. The British organized the industry be-

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fore the arrival of the French. They are paying better wages and obtain part of their labor from French West Africa. They have the best river transportation and the only ports in this region worthy of the name.

The French are greatly handicapped by the lack of adequate ports in this part of the Gulf of Guinea. In the town of Abidjan they tried to build a port, connecting it with the interior through the second-longest railway line of French West Africa—nearly 800 kilometers—having its terminus at Bobo-Dioulasso. But the Abidjan "port" is really no more than a float at which boats try to dock. When the sea is calm, they may succeed; but when it is wrathful, they must wait or run the risk of crushing the float. Even when the ship is alongside the float, the problem of unloading has not been solved. Most of it is done on native shoulders, which certainly cannot be rapid transit under this burning sky. Small cranes may take a chance on the worth of the float and more often than not come to grief. So great is the jam of boats awaiting their turn that sometimes it is more profitable to proceed to Dakar.

Just the same, the Ivory Coast does some profitable business in palm kernels, palm oil and coffee. Palm kernels are the third-largest export article of French West

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Africa. The 100,000 tons she produces represent about one-third of the entire world production.

Cotton is the dream of every young country. England could not have forged so far ahead if it had not been for her cotton industry which virtually clothed the world at one time. Nor could the United States have become so rich without her cotton fields. India and Egypt have seen their national income increase because of cotton. In French West Africa, too, cotton has long been a hope and a headache. It has raised hopes, especially in Dahomey and the French Sudan. If cotton could be domesticated, French West Africa would be a rich country, not merely *in spe* but also in fact.

Many efforts have been made in this direction, both by the Government and by private individuals. The late Governor General Carde opened six model cotton farms in the Sudan. Governmental Engineer Bélime experimented with gravitational irrigation in the district of Barouéli, some 200 kilometers from Bamako. Most interesting was the experiment of Baron Maurice Hirsch, the Jewish philanthropist. He wanted to settle some of the Jewish victims of the Russian pogroms under the Czars in this part of Africa. For that purpose he founded the *Société de Culture Cotonnière du Niger* about 600 kilometers down the river from Ba-

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mako. His scheme failed, and he turned to Canada, South America and Asia Minor.

The natives grow some wild cotton, but it is of no commercial use. Not more than 4,000 tons of French West African cotton enter the trade. France alone needs eighty times as much. In 1928 the A. O. F. produced about twice as much cotton as she does now. What accounts for the failure? Can the situation be remedied?

Cotton needs plenty of sunshine, spread over six or seven months a year. It could get that in certain regions of French West Africa, especially the northern part of Sudan. Cotton also needs rain. It should begin at sowing time, increase during the period of growth, decrease when the bolls ripen, and stop altogether when the picking season starts. Such conditions prevail over a large part of the American cotton belt, but they are not absolutely necessary for the welfare of cotton. Some of the best staples are grown in Egypt, where rainfall is little. There irrigation takes the place of the heavenly gift. Irrigation is possible in many parts of the Niger valley. It is only a question of money and perseverance, because the money may be lost. Large-scale irrigation has not yet been given a chance in French West Africa.

Cotton is anything but a delicate growth, and so it will



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thrive in many soils: loam, heavy clay, sandy bottom land, even uplands. The best soil is the deep loam, because it maintains uniform conditions of moisture, and is well drained. It is not the sandy soil, which cannot retain water, nor the clay soil which retains too much. In such a vast land as French West Africa, having such a wide variety of soils, the requisite quality could surely be found. Again the difficulty is that of capital, labor and transportation. More money would be required for experiments, and more pioneers would be needed to do the work.

The colony of Dahomey is not entirely deficient in other products. It grows corn on an ascending scale. It has kola forests nearly everywhere, particularly in the Niger valley. The natives could not get along easily without its nut, which they call *guru*. They chew it constantly as a stimulant, and they also eat it.

This area also produces bananas, but far from enough to cover even the needs of France. Since the fruit is highly perishable, fast ships would be needed to take it to its destination. The colony also produces millet and rice, indigo and sisal, ambary fiber and karite dry almonds, as well as all kinds of vegetable oils. The French Government has sought to encourage the cultivation of coffee by exempting it from the small import duty imposed on other colonial

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products. This measure did not produce the expected results. There are some plantations in the Futa-Djallon region, but not enough to give French West Africa a standing as a coffee-producing country. Efforts are made at tobacco-growing along flood regions of rivers, and wheat is cultivated near the top of the Niger bend.

### THE ILLUSION OF COLONIAL WEALTH

For hundreds of miles forests spread along the southern coast of French West Africa. This is the real home of mahogany, and the *okume*—light mahogany—of ebony and the silk-cotton tree, fan-palm, oil-palm and walnut trees. The papyrus sometimes grows to a height of twenty feet. There is Negro-pepper, a variety of the capsicum, a member of the potato family, and also sweet-potato, manioc and gum-copal.

In the northern part of French West Africa there are herds of sheep, but they have no wool because of the heat. Since wool would be most important for a native textile industry, experiments have been made to cross the native lambs with woolly rams from South Africa. The offspring has wool, but the experts are not sure whether

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some atavistic reversion will not deprive them of their precious cover. There are also oxen in the savannahs, as well as goats and donkeys. Higher to the north is the home of the camel.

Few countries are as rich in fish as French West Africa. Fish stories originating there should arouse no suspicion. These warm waters are teeming with life, as if Nature wanted to compensate man for its own barrenness on the inhospitable shores. The richest aquatic life is to be found in the neighborhood of the most desolate desert country. It is said of Port Etienne, the harbor of the Mauretanian desert, that the natives need do no more than dip a pot into the water to supply their food for several days. All the way from the Canaries fishermen come to these coasts.

The Senegal and Niger Rivers also abound in fish. It is little wonder that fish is the diet of the natives of French West Africa. The black women buy their favorite fish for the smallest copper coin. They take it home and deposit it near the entrance of the *case*, fully exposed to the broiling sun. They believe that age lends flavor to the fish and that it is no good unless it reeks.

French West Africa has many minerals, but not one of them in large enough quantities, to our best present knowl-

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edge. Gold stands in fourth place among the colony's export articles, but even so its value was only two million dollars in an average year. There is gold in several places, especially near Buré, at the foot of the mountains, on the Upper Niger. All the companies founded for the exploitation of gold deposits have failed. Natives can make a few francs a day by washing out alluvial deposits, but there are no vast fortunes in the known gold finds, and heavy investment in expensive machinery has turned out to be wasted.

There is titanium, which is used for dyes, electrodes and alloys—as an alloy, to strengthen other minerals and metals. There is mineral pitch near the fort of Assini on the Ivory Coast. There is copper in several districts, and there is also salt. There is jasper, highly prized bloodstone and black marble. Not far from Dakar and Rufisque there is limestone. The natives build their primitive "blast furnaces," smelting iron, just as the men of the Iron Age did. There are traces of manganese in the colony, and more of it should be found, because the adjacent Gold Coast of Britain is very rich in that mineral. It is safe to assume that it does not stop at the boundary.

The industries of A. O. F. are of the most primitive kind: breweries, quarries, mills and a few textile plants. The ad-

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ministration has not fostered industries for the simple reason that the colony is more profitable for France as a source of raw material than as a potential competitor. With local cheap labor some of the colonial industries could operate more profitably than the industries of the mother country.

French West Africa is, manifestly, not a rich country, contrary to many prevalent beliefs. For many years Germany has been propagating the idea that colonies are veritable gold mines. She told the world that her own problems could be solved if she regained the colonies taken from her at the end of the First World War. She revived colonial societies, founded new ones, published newspapers and magazines devoted exclusively to this problem, and made a cult of colonial enterprise. She was so successful in her propaganda that she inoculated the rest of the world with the colonial virus.

The example of French West Africa shows that the gifts of Nature do not make a rich colony. Her soil is good, bad and indifferent, depending upon the location, rainfall and the population. The treasures of her subsoil may be vast. They have not even been scratched. A century ago the Witwatersrand had more gold than it has now. Yet it was very poor then; now it is very rich. Then its wealth

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was unknown to the world; now it is known only too well.

Taking the opposite case, Switzerland today is not better endowed by nature than she was in the days of the imaginary Wilhelm Tell. Then she revolted against her tyrants because the poverty-stricken country had nothing to lose. Today she is one of the richest countries in Europe.

It is the climate, above all, that makes Africa a poor country. It wears out and depresses man and defeats him at the very outset, so that he makes no attempt to fight. That does not mean that the tropics lack their addicts. They do fight and always come back, fascinated by their implacable enemy. Their eyes glowing with fever, they constantly reiterate their vow of always remaining faithful to their cruel mistress.

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## A MISCELLANY OF TYPES

About 150 colored types inhabit French West Africa. Some of them are no more related to one another than Mexicans are to New Englanders. They differ from one another in physique and in physiognomy. Many of them have their own languages, customs and social organizations. Others have adopted their neighbors' ways, are speaking

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their tongues, have mixed with them freely. There is a difference between the inhabitants of the three great zones: the northern desert region (with the intermediary steppe), the savannah country and the southern forest area of the coast. The people of the desert are strongly blended with Moors and Berbers, who are members of the white race. The Negroes of the great savannah plains are better built, taller and more self-confident. The colored people of the forest region are shorter, with large torsos and small legs. They are fearful, furtive, sometimes cowardly and often cruel. This is the influence of the dense forest, alive with fears and dangers. This is the influence also of the white settlers who raided the coastal areas first. Here they carried on mass slave raids.

Not all Negro tribes are represented in Dakar. There are tribes that have never even heard the capital's name. Among those who are not represented in larger numbers there—and who therefore have not been mentioned in the first chapter—the Mandingues must be given special attention. Various dialects of their language are spoken by about 5,000,000 people, more than the users of any other tongue in French West Africa. The bulk of them live in the bend formed by the ascending and descending streams of the Niger. As a rule they are less lazy than the Ouolofs,

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whom we have encountered in Dakar, but they are also less intelligent. It is not very hard to make them heed the voice of authority. In some ways they are like children, and fairly well-behaved ones at that.

Their kinsmen, the Bambaras, have been photographed more often than any other natives. They are the black people who wear those weird ritual scars on their foreheads and cheeks, which they dye white. They remind one of the German "color" students who used to collect scars as a sign of valor. But these "savages" are too intelligent to let anyone inflict real scars on their faces.

Some 4,000,000 Negroes speak the language of the Mossis. They live south of the Mandingues, near the top of British Gold Coast, which they frequently visit to make some money on cocoa harvests. The region which the bulk of the Mossis inhabit is known as the Haute-Volta. It is the most thickly populated part of the country, outside of Dakar. These tribesmen live in sixteen native provinces, each of which is headed by a Governor, and the sixteen Governors form the native ministry. Over their entire country rules the king, called "Naba," selected by a college of a half dozen electors, who must be both wise and old. The Mossis are known as good merchants, alert people and good organizers, which is a rare gift in the bush.



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On the coast, where impenetrable forests have perpetuated tribal traits and ways, the greatest variety of types may be found. They like to remain in the impassable region, where they live a more backward existence than the people of the plains. So shy are they of contact with white people that they have derived little advantage from French civilization.

Among the non-colored people we have encountered the Moors in Dakar, but we have not yet come across the Tuaregs. They are the inhabitants of Southern Sahara, from Timbuktu to Zinder. There are probably no other people with as large a *Lebensraum*. Over a territory of 1,500,000 square kilometers a quarter of a million of them live. Yet the living they make is wretched, particularly now that order has been created in the desert. Previously they derived their livelihood by raiding caravans. This they did with the maximum of success and the minimum of inconvenience because they are first-class shots and daredevil riders. They are tall, strong and muscular, capable of superhuman exertion in the saddle, stalking their prey for days without more than a cat-nap. But they seem to be utterly incapable of a sedentary life. Living in one place is the worst possible punishment for them. The French Government took advantage of this in assigning compulsory urban residence to

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obnoxious Tuareg chiefs. They were allowed to move around freely in the towns—mostly oases—but not outside of them. The chiefs faded quickly and died.

These are people of Berber blood, very little mixed. The Arabs call them the "veiled people," because their men wear the *litham*, a veil drawn tightly over their features up to the eyes. The Black Tuaregs wear dark-blue veils and the whites wear veils of lighter color. They are not supposed to unveil their lips even in sleep. In order to eat they raise the *litham* slightly.

Their women, on the other hand, wear no veils, which makes this tribe quite unique in the Islamic world. The males respect their wives and treat them well, which is extraordinary in the African world. Some of the younger women are Oriental beauties. They have an attractive native dress, which looks like a bolero. But the Tuaregs like to measure beauty by the ton. The fatter a woman, the more admiration she elicits. The richer ones can admire their beauty all day long, since the serfs and slaves perform the household duties.

One would expect the desert to develop a certain type of democracy, but there is nothing of the kind. There is a rigid caste system among these tough Saharans. The lowest caste is that of the *ikelan*, Negro slaves, who busy them-

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selves in and around the low red tents of their masters. The outdoor slaves, *buzu*, occupy a position of privilege among the captives. The serfs, *imghad*, are of the same stock as the masters. They prefer to bind themselves to the strong men of the tribe, who assure their livelihood. Their position is similar to that of the medieval vassal. Near the top of the social pyramid are the *marabouts*, or priests. Their high position is traditional, because the Tuareg is not a pious Mohammedan, not even a hypocrite. The nobles, *imajeghan*, are on the very top, and they behave as feudal lords did in the Middle Ages. They would pollute themselves by stooping to honest work. War and robbery are the only occupations of a nobleman. Not long ago they still carried spears and daggers bound to their left forearms. Now they are armed with a straight two-edged sword and a rifle.

The black people of French Africa—of the tropics in general—are seldom able to perform the methodical duties modern conditions exact. They can and do perform miracles of hard work, but not in a systematic way and certainly not when left to their own devices. For days Senegalese soldiers could march when their white comrades were no longer able to stand on their feet. In the cavalryman's saddle they could endure more than seemed humanly possible.

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The native of tropical Africa seems to lack ambition, according to our Western standards. He is afflicted with diseases; his life forces are impaired. Nature provides him with enough to live on without great exertion. When it fails him, he lies down and dies. In this climate every one is a fatalist. He is not interested in saving for the future because he feels instinctively that there is no future. A pestilence sweeps the countryside and he dies quicker than a blade of grass under the scorching sun. His children die in infancy. But next year there may again be peanuts and fish for him, a baobab tree, perhaps, and enough water to quench his thirst.

## TRIBAL FOLKWAYS

The Negroes live in *soukhalas*, huts, which the French call *cases*. They are made of mud, often round, sometimes quadrangular. Their roofs are made of earth and sometimes they are flat, or they are thatched, and often they are peaked. The Masse tribesmen south of Lake Chad build high domed houses of clay, which are primitive masterpieces.

The building material is dug out of the spot near which

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the hut stands; hence the native villages have a pock-marked appearance. This may be a shrewd device to impede the approach of enemies. In the huts themselves there is no clear distinction between the living room, granary and stable. Sometimes they are elevated, and sometimes they are depressed, but always they are huddled together. In their entirety they form a maze probably meant to confuse the enemy and facilitate defense.

The interior of the huts is as simple as their exterior. The sacrificial logs are heaped high in one of the corners. The signs of a protecting animal or a hand-print (to keep away evil spirits) may be on the walls. Jars and amphoras, low benches and masoned beds complete the furnishings. The family's ancestors are buried under the hut.

During the dry season village life moves into the open. Every activity has its special musical accompaniment. Work in the fields is done to the sounds of music. A young couple shrieks its happiness to high heavens. Another tune is played when the peasants begin to harvest the produce. Thrashing the grain is performed rhythmically while the music plays. There is music when circumcision is performed and at weddings. Music accompanies the burials. Every village, every family has its special step. Good dancers often improvise and have admiring imitators. Men dance with

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men, women with women. There are war-dances too, and the performers dye their cheeks in terrifying patterns. The more warlike the appearance, the meeker the natives.

To the ears of the whites the natives' music sounds like a monotonous tam-tam. To the natives it is exciting and stirring. It rouses them so much at times that they fall into a veritable trance. Musical hysteria sweeps the inhabitants of entire villages into a mass frenzy.

The relation of the sexes is simple: the man is the master, the woman is the servant. Wives are not treated worse than cattle because they are pieces of property, like oxen, and they are too valuable to lose. In most tribes a woman has no will of her own; her fate is in the husband's hands. She may be presented to a friend permanently or as a temporary gift. She may be used to pay off a debt, in lieu of pigs and cows. The husband rides the mule and the wife carries the burden. When the head of the family dies, his wife may be bequeathed to his heir. Should the son be the heir, she may become her own son's wife.

The condition of women among the chiefs of tribes is even stranger. Some of these chiefs have a large number of wives. Their marital problems have been investigated in the Congo, to which the following facts refer, but a similar situation also exists in the blacker parts of French West

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**Africa.** In the case of the Avongara chiefs the following marital hierarchy was found to exist:

1. The ranking wife was the first-married one.
2. The second wife was the chief of the *harems*, who was sometimes the most intelligent of all wives.
3. These wives were designated by numbers in the order of the marriage, such as No. 3, No. 4, etc.
4. This was the favorite wife lacking the requisite precedences.
5. This wife was in charge of the household.
6. This lady was the first cook of her husband.
7. And this one was the second cook.  
These were the legal wives. There were also others:
8. Prisoners of war if young and pleasant to behold.
9. *Les petites amies*, whose official function was to dance and to make merry.
10. Just young girls to be fattened so as to be appointed official wives or to be presented to friends.

In the French territories it has often been suggested that order should be created in the marital relations of the chiefs. A certain hierarchy should be established, depending upon the importance of the native heads of tribes, and they should be allowed to have a corresponding number of wives.

## MONOTHEISTS, ANIMISTS AND FETISHISTS

French West Africa is one of the best places, because of the large number of her Negro tribes, to study the psy-

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chology of the natives as expressed by their religions and customs. Nominally about one-half of the population is Mohammedan, and the other half is animist. Islam rules in the desert, steppe and savannah country, and the animists live in the forest region. The dividing line between the two beliefs is a horizontal line from Dakar to Lake Chad. North of this line is most of Senegal, all Mauretania, and nearly all of French Sudan and the Niger colony. In reality, only about one-tenth of the natives may be considered true Mohammedans, while the others are thinly camouflaged animists. The West African has always been able to reconcile his monotheistic creed with polytheistic practices. There is a scattering of Catholics and Protestants.

Islam was born in the desert, Arabia, and it achieved its greatest successes in desert countries. Its God, Allah, is a desert deity, and its Prophet, Mohammed, had been a caravan driver in the desert. It originated as the religion of nomads, and its strongest appeal has always been to nomads. It has a special appeal to the inhabitants of all dry belts. A simple creed, it gratifies the simple nomad's craving for an uncomplicated explanation of the universe. It does not require the faithful to perform his prayers in temples. It is no less valid under Allah's vaulted sky than under the dome of the mosque. Mohammedanism has no priestly



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caste. Nomads cannot afford to maintain such a class in all the pomp to which it would be entitled by its special position.

Islam is the creed of thirsty people. It gives them the promise of a world beyond in which there are palm trees, deep shades and beautiful brooks. It is the creed of people whom Nature constantly fights. They are fatalists, who know that life can never improve. Therefore they concentrate upon the blessings of Heaven.

Islam is the warrior's creed, and the nomad's life is incessant warfare. Always on the move, he can never settle down to a place of his own. In his migrations he is forced to tread on other people's toes. The distinction between "mine" and "thine" hardly exists in the desert. The great distinction is between strength and weakness. The nomad is forced to sustain his life of endless struggle, to fight for grass and for every drop of water in the *wadi*—parched bed of streams. Islam tells her warrior sons that death in battle is the hero's greatest reward. Temporary sorrows of this earthly life will be replaced by eternal bliss.

Islam is a democratic religion, recognizing—in its pure form—no caste or class except those of piety and strength. Particularly does it appeal to Negroes, giving them nominal

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equality with their white masters. In Allah's awesome presence, emperors are like grains of dust.

Mohammedanism also appeals to nomads because it glorifies wandering as a religious virtue. A pilgrimage to Mecca, birthplace of the Prophet, at least once in a lifetime, is enjoined upon the faithful, no matter how far they may live from the holy shrine. This sublimated and transcendent nomadism is a strong connecting link among all sons of the true faith.

Some of the precepts of Islam have helped to improve sanitary conditions among Mohammedan natives. The proscription against alcohol has actually saved some tribes from extinction. The laws of cleanliness, although observed mostly as a formality, have aided white doctors in their work.

Most of the Mohammedans of West Africa are less than indifferent. But some of them are extremely zealous in the performance of their religious duties. Most of the famed native leaders of rebellion against the white man's rule were fanatical followers of Islam. The enemy's blood glorifies the name of Allah.

What the medicine man is for the animist, the *marabout* is for Islam. Happy is the village that has such a famous doctor of Koranic law; the afflicted come to him from far

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and wide. Most famous are the *marabouts* of the Mourites sect, founded by Amadou-Bamba, who died only a few years ago. There are only two classes of people in this sect: those who work and those who pray. The peasants of the sect are known as the best workers, and the *marabouts* as the best money-makers.

The Catholic Church and many western religious orders sent missionaries into French West Africa, but it was the Mohammedans who made the converts—this in spite of the fact that the weight of the State was often behind the Church. This paradox is not as curious as it seems. The ritual of the Church is too elaborate, and the backwoods people could not comprehend it. Nor did its priests and churches fit into nomadic habits. Besides, Christianity belongs to a race which the Negroes regard as their oppressors. Not so Islam, which emphasizes the neighbors' creed.

Mohammedanism came to the tropics from Northern Africa, across the desert. While the Prophet's Arab followers were not black, they intermarried with the colored people. To many Negroes Islam meant the masterful Arab of the steppe. It meant a horse and rifle. These Arabs were strong people, and their strength was the type the Negro understood. "If the native lets himself be converted to Islam," a cynical observer remarked, "it is to have a rifle

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and to loot rather than to be looted." Another observer added: "Islam did not change the head-hunter's habits, nor his morals."

Animism is, undoubtedly, the religion of the large majority of the natives, even though they call themselves Mohammedans. Belief in spirits is the essence of animism. The primitive man moves in a wonder-world, as the great authority on this subject, Sir Edward Burnett Tylor, pointed out. He sees a body which moves and does things. Then he sees the same body suddenly deprived of motion, because it is dead. What makes the body move? Puzzled, the native gropes for an explanation. Then he has dreams, sees phantoms and beholds visions. He combines them and creates the ghost-soul. The dead chief is the aboriginal god, Herbert Spencer said.

Animists are constantly creating gods, the embodiments of spirits. There are natives in West Africa, who have not yet reached even this primitive stage. They are the "animatists," who go so far as to worship inanimate objects. Not all objects are sacred, of course; only those that arouse strong emotions, mostly fear. Frequently these objects look queer, or are dangerous; then they are worshipped. This is fetishism, akin to animatism, although there is a difference between the two. The fetishist is more active than the ani-

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matist: he employs charms to call good spirits into service, and to expel the evil ones. The world he lives in is crowded with miraculous forces to be propitiated or exorcised.

Below the nomadic belt of Africa, in the forest country and on its outskirts, animism and the related animatism and fetishism flourish. Nature is full of evil forces which must be dealt with according to their strength. The forest is full of phantoms. Man and Nature are in constant conflict. The following story illustrates the point:

Two brothers wanted to build a shack to be used as a hunting lodge. This being an important step, they asked their dead father's spirit for advice. "Find a place in the brush that no man's eyes have beheld," the spirit replied. "There you must build. But be on your guard to hurt no living creature."

The brothers went into the brush and stopped at a spot that appeared to be just right. One of them offered to bring the twigs for the thatch, and the other to bring the water. So they went their separate ways. But soon they returned with empty hands, their souls full of fear. The first one spoke: "My brother, I was seeking thatch for our roof. I struck a branch and it murmured: 'The man has cut me . . . the man has cut me.' And I, the man, took fright." The other brother spoke: "My brother, I was looking for water

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to prepare our mortar. I found a well and began to draw water and the well whispered: 'The man has drawn me . . . the man has drawn me.' And I, the man, took fright."

It was part of the ritual in certain sections of Africa to throw virgins to crocodiles at religious feasts. The spirits demanded human sacrifices. In French West Africa's colony of Dahomey some of the most gruesome spectacles were performed. The bloodiest of them were known as the grand customs. Upon the death of the king, hundreds of people were killed, his servants, attendants and wives, mostly those whom he liked and who were most attached to him. They were to be his retinue in the world beyond.

The rites were celebrated twice a year. The human victims were to await the king. "The victims," says the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "chiefly prisoners of war, were dressed in calico shirts decorated round the neck and down the sleeves with red bindings, and with a crimson patch on the left breast and wore long white nightcaps with spirals of blue ribbon sewn on them. Some of them, tied in baskets, were at one stage of the proceedings taken to the top of a high platform, together with an alligator, a cat and a hawk in similar baskets, and paraded on the heads of the amazons. The king then made a speech, explaining that the victims were sent to testify to his greatness in spiritland,

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the men and the animals each to their kind. They were then hurled down into the middle of a surging crowd of natives, and butchered."

Such practices were outlawed long ago, but certain symbolic vestiges of them persist. Each village has a *tana*, which may be a crocodile, a boa, or another animate or inanimate thing. It is a taboo, although it may assume no reciprocal obligation toward man. The village people explain that at the time it was settled, a crocodile or a boa was guarding the fields. Hence these animals are sacred.

### FEARS AND CHARMS

In certain parts of West Africa the chief is still the medicine man. He may also be the smith, because his craft is hallowed, says Sir George Frazer in *The Golden Bough*.

When the chief dies a secret family council determines his successor in certain parts of the colony. Then he is seized and is thrown into the fetish house, to be kept a prisoner there until he accepts the honor thrust upon him. In other regions a religious king shares power with the civilian king. It is the religious head who controls the weather and exercises an unrestricted power of veto. By putting down his red staff he can designate a place as sacred.

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Souls are frequently trapped as they wander away from their owners in sleep. Some people catch such fugitives, in the form of prowling animals, and hold them for ransom. When they receive their coin, they release the soul. Not getting it, they tie the animal over the fire and smoke it. As it begins to singe, the owner of the soul falls ill. Not all soul-catchers are professional business men. Some of them are just amateurs who are after the soul of an enemy. Once they get it, they put it in a caldron, where it is cut and torn by knives and hooks until the owner dies.

"In West Africa," Frazer says, "if a drop of your blood has fallen on the ground, you must carefully cover it up, run and stamp it into the soil; if it has fallen on the side of a canoe or tree, the place is cut out and the chip destroyed. One motive of these African customs may be the wish to prevent the blood from falling into the hands of magicians, who might make an evil use of it. That is admittedly the reason why people in West Africa stamp out any blood of theirs which has dropped on the ground or cut out any wood that has been soaked with it."

Natives bury their shorn hair so that witches may not get hold of it. The chieftain's saliva is carefully collected, hidden or buried on the Slave Coast for the same reason. Natives exchange their souls with animals, if this is to their



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advantage. The wildest animals are usually selected. The medicine man or wizard draws blood from the animal's ear and from his own arm. Then he inoculates himself with the beast's blood and gives it part of his own. He expects to be as strong as a leopard or panther. Women commit their souls to the serpent, owl or viper.

Charms are numerous throughout French West Africa. The mistletoe enjoys great vogue among the Ouolofs of Senegal. They take it with them to war in the belief it keeps them whole. The Druids of ancient Gaul entertained the same belief about the mistletoe. The origin of this superstition may be identical in both places, a French writer remarks. To blacks and whites a plant that sinks no roots into the soil has supernatural attributes. It may have fallen from the sky, a gift of god.

Members of the Mossi tribe in the Haute-Volta indulge in a strange custom which was widespread in older days. It is the *poussi-poussi*. Two natives recognize each other. Let us assume that both of them carry heavy loads. Promptly they put down their burdens in the middle of the road. The younger of the two throws himself on the ground and the older one follows his example. Facing each other, they bow their foreheads into the dust. Then they strike the ground with their forearms for a full minute, their elbows

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wide apart, thumbs upright. This elaborate and troublesome greeting is both a propitiation and a gesture of courtesy.

## THE NATIVE FACES THE WORLD

How is the black man treated in French West Africa? The answer is that he is subject to three different treatments: that of the Government, his white employer and his black neighbor and chief.

The French colonial administration has long been famous for its humanity. We saw before that slaves in the older possessions were freed as far back as 1848. We have also seen that the natives of four French West African towns were granted full citizenship rights. Black deputies represented them in the Paris legislative Chamber for many years. Negroes reached positions of high authority, even in the Cabinet. Colored soldiers were treated on an equal basis with the white troops in the armed forces. The average Frenchman looked upon the colonials as younger brothers rather than subjects. A veritable cult of the natives grew up in France, vividly demonstrated at the Colonial Exposition in 1931 at Vincennes, on the outskirts of Paris. The jungle

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kings and their subjects were given the friendliest welcomes.

The actual treatment of the natives is, of course, dependent upon the executors of the policy rather than on the policy itself. The Government of French West Africa was fortunate in enlisting the support of some brilliant colonial administrators, but not all of them were of the best quality. The real difficulty begins with the lower ranks. Some of the officials are animated by a pioneering, quasi-missionary spirit. This is France's frontier-land which must be kept, and the reputation of the *patrie* must be upheld. Others go overseas because they are anxious to advance rapidly. An official making his mark in the colonies is noted more quickly than if he had stuck in the bureaucracy of Paris. For years the African colonies were looked upon as a testing ground for executive talent.

Others have been tempted by "adventure." Life in the colonies is geared to a different tempo. Authority can lend excitement in the dullest of settings. Vacations at home are long, and a colonial is a hero in his native village. Still others have been tempted by the higher remuneration. There are also the worse types, who hope to gain in the African jungles the power that was withheld from them at home. Henpecked husbands and tyrannized petty bureaucrats can

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always take it out on the helpless blacks of the backwoods.

Even the greatest resolves conceived at home cannot always be carried out on the spot. The climate is cruel; it frays the nerves. The task is hard, almost superhuman. The native lives on a different planet; the utmost patience is required to understand all his vagaries. This is the hardest type of pioneering, unrelieved by delicious *apéritifs* on delightful café terraces. Adventure-seekers learn soon enough that the romance of the jungle exists only on the screen. Many officials stand up to the test; others lose their heads; still others are brutalized and inflict needless sufferings on their victims.

The Government in French West Africa is as good as its lowest official. It is these people who actually meet the natives on the steppes, in the bush and in the forest. They are France to the native village; they interpret the laws. The "commandant" of a so-called circle is really the father and the mother of the natives.

The State not only does things for the natives, but it also exacts from them their share of work. The black man pays taxes, no matter how little he earns. If he has no money, he must work on the roads. This is little better than slavery, says Albert Londres, noted roving reporter in his book, *Terre d'Ebène*. He makes the point that the colonial admin-

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istration frequently has a surplus, and compares this fact with the other well-known fact that the home government is invariably in the red. France should turn back the surplus into public works, he says. What right has she to take this money away from the black wretches? He observes, in passing, that every year hundreds of thousands seek seasonal work in nearby English colonies. Thousands of them stay there for good to earn higher wages, to escape military service.

The charge has been brought against the French régime that it is too liberal, that it treats the blacks as if they were on a plane with the whites, that it wants to educate them out of their environment and thereby make them unhappy by instilling ambitions into them that cannot be gratified. What can a young black man do with the diploma he gains at the Lycée Faidherbe of Saint-Louis? What can he do with all the Greek and Latin he learns, with all the trigonometry he absorbs at school? He cannot use them in his native village. He feels out of place at home, and his fellow villagers are cool to him. Would it not be better, these critics ask, that the young Negroes should be instructed not as intellectuals but as artisans? This is a complaint of the white reactionaries who are very vocal and may be expected to

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become even more so under a New Order, made ruthless in Africa by Nazi racial intolerance.

In the same category are the complaints about the colored people's military service. There is general agreement that they are good soldiers. But what happened to them in their French regiments? During two wars they rubbed shoulders with the white troops in the trenches and in the ill-starred Maginot Line. They gained the idea—the complaint runs—that their masters were dependent upon them. In the hinterland the Senegalese private had white people polish his boots for a copper. He was the darling of the ladies, who often kept up their amorous correspondence with demobilized soldiers. "When the Senegalese *tirailleurs* leave home they are naive and sweet," Albert Londres writes, "but when they return they are crooks and liars."

What about the relations of the white employers and the natives? "Silent Africa is nothing but a football field," Londres says. "There are two teams, always the same, and both white. One wears the colors of the Government and the other one the colors of the business men. The Negro is the ball."

The business man went into Africa because he wanted to make money in a hurry. He cannot wait for twenty years; he wants to make his fortune in one. He recruits native workers,

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kills them with heavy work, gives them next to nothing, and holds them as his slaves. The black man has no redress against the white employer. The contracts are in proper form and the Negro cannot read. On the other hand, the employer is familiar with all the loopholes of the law. He may have "pull" in Paris; at least he says so. The Negro is not even articulate; he cannot complain.

In the relations of Negro to Negro the past lies heavily on the poor. The native policeman is quicker with his whip than the white man, and his language is even more abusive. The big black man oppresses the little fellow. The social hierarchy has undergone little change in ages. The chief rules with an iron hand and he crushes all who get in his way. The humane French official steps in and punishes the chief, but he cannot have his eyes on everyone, and the victims are too frightened to appeal to him for redress. There is still slavery in most parts of Africa, although it is called by a different name: the slaves are "house prisoners."

When General Archinard freed the slaves of the chieftain Ahmadu he placed them in "villages of freedom." Once he asked the village elders if they felt happy as free men. "Yes," the elders replied with some hesitation. Pressed for a frank answer they admitted: "But we need something." "What is it?" the General asked. "*We* need some slaves."

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Taking into account the quality of the soil and of the people of French West Africa, does she have any chance of further development? In a very interesting contribution to the book *Limits of Land Settlement*, prepared under the direction of Isaiah Bowman, J. H. Wellington, of the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, examines this question. He points out that the low population rate in Western Africa is due to several causes, such as low birth rate, high infant mortality, disease, retarded growth as a result of intensive slave trade and intertribal wars in the past, and also climatic causes. Rainfall is predominantly of the summer type, resulting in high surface flow, run-off and washing away of soil. The purchasing capacity of the natives is low, so that local markets are scarce. Crops must be such as can bear the cost of transport to great world markets. He quotes the German author, A. Fischer, who estimated in his book, *Zur Frage der Tragfaehigkeit des Lebensraumes* that the present population of Africa is only 8 percent of the possible total, and that the greatest increase would be possible in Inner Africa, between the Sahara and the Zambesi River. This territory comprises French West Africa. In Fischer's view this area alone would be capable of supporting a population of 1,500,000,000, instead of the present total of 79,000,000. While this may be just one



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more example of the intoxication which the very name of Africa caused in some German scholars, it is generally admitted that the absorbing capacity of French West Africa is much higher than the rate of population indicates. To get the maximum produce out of this soil, tremendous capital investments would be needed. Africa may yet be the continent of the future.



## *IV. Heroes and Barbarians*

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### A COLONIAL NAPOLEON

THE FRENCH followed two lines of advance in their penetration into the interior of Africa. First, they moved from the Atlantic coast eastward, following the Senegal and, later, the Niger Rivers. In this expedition their first base was the island of Gorée, then Saint-Louis, and Dakar. The second route was from the coastline of the Gulf of Guinea northward, following rivers and forest clearings.

The creator of French West Africa was Louis-Leon-Caesar Faidherbe, whom his contemporaries called the "Colonial Napoleon." He came from the French city of Lille, which was a textile center and had little contact with colonies and the sea. This great empire-builder was the son

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of a hatter. It has been noted that his parents were well advanced in age when he was born.

Faidherbe was the great hero of the fifties and sixties of the last century. He was loved and hated; people called him *le nègre* and *le sauvage* behind his back. But he was also feared and respected. Few men could be as ruthless as he when occasion demanded, but no other man did as much as he for the natives of French West Africa. He knew the country and its people, spoke Arabic and the Negro Ouolof, both with an atrocious French accent.

In eleven years Faidherbe "pacified" 400,000 square miles, the foundation of French West Africa. His successors merely had to continue his policy. He won this empire with three battalions of infantry, two of which consisted of natives, a mixed squadron of mounted spahis, and two batteries of artillery. Some of his greatest victories were scored with a mere handful of men.

When Faidherbe first visited tropical Africa, the French had little more than the island of Gorée, the towns of Dakar and Saint-Louis, and a few *comptoirs* on the coast. He wanted to secure these possessions against three enemies, the most dangerous of whom appeared to be at that moment the Moors to the north of the Senegal River. The second danger threatened him from a few ambitious chief-

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tains of the interior, and the third menace was represented by the European Powers participating in the scramble for Africa, a scramble which was reaching its climax at that time.

Faidherbe was appointed Governor of Senegal in December, 1854. This title meant little in those days. Senegal was merely a geographic name. Faidherbe, an army officer with some colonial background in the West Indies, had first to create the country over which he was to rule. He turned his attention to the Waloffs, living right behind Dakar. This tribe was then under the orders of a queen who, in turn, received orders from a domineering Moorish chieftain, Mohammed-el-Habib, with headquarters in the desert country on the right bank of the Senegal River. This chieftain was the ruler of the Trarzas, who were trying to gain in raids what Nature had denied them. His kingdom was called "white" because it was inhabited by Moors and Berbers. He was also the master of the swift-moving Braknas and Dwaish desert tribes. His rule extended as far north as the Adrar range in the Sahara. Mohammed-el-Habib was also recognized by the remnants of the Zenaga tribe, which had given its name to Senegal.

The country of Mohammed-el-Habib was poverty-stricken, and the caravans passing through his land were

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few. The country south of the river, on the other hand, had grass and a settled farming population. While it was not rich, it was more prosperous than the desert country. Merchant caravans periodically visited the hamlets. River craft sailed up and down the Senegal. The Queen of the Waloffs paid the Trarzan king regular tribute. He also collected money from the captains of the river craft, and held up caravans. Wherever he encountered resistance he employed firearms and his forays against peaceful traders, *razzias*, were feared.

Governor Faidherbe demanded that King Mohammed-el-Habib abandon the Waloff country, stop collecting imposts and duties, give up pillaging. The Moorish chieftain answered promptly:

"I have received thy conditions, and here are mine: the amount of duties collected for me must be increased. All forts built by the French must be destroyed. All craft is prohibited to sail on the river without my permission. Preliminary to the negotiations, Governor Faidherbe must be dishonorably discharged and returned to France."

Faidherbe decided to deliver his reply in person. The best way to approach the enemy's country was in boats, but the Moorish king was wily and his eyes were like eagles'. The smoke of the steamships would have betrayed the presence

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of the French forces, and so Faidherbe employed sailing vessels. Mohammed-el-Habib had seized the bridgehead across Saint-Louis. It was the Governor's policy to avoid bloodshed as much as possible, but he was not reluctant to strike terror into rebel hearts. As part of his campaign of terror, he set fire to native villages that opposed him. On the other hand, he gave all assistance to the villagers who helped him. He supplied them with seeds, food and medicine.

The Waloffs hated their Moorish oppressors, as was clearly shown by their proverbs: "If you meet a Moor and a viper at the same time, kill the Moor first"; "In the Moor's tent there is nothing honest but the master's horse." But the black natives were intimidated by the ruthless Moor. The campaign was arduous and long. The Moors had superior numbers, but the French had superior equipment. Faced with a regular armed force, the desert chieftain, Mohammed-el-Habib, soon lost his haughty air, withdrew into the desert so rapidly that he left a rich booty of oxen, calves and royal camels in the enemy's hands. By the end of 1855 the Trarzas and Braknas were pushed onto the right bank of the river. The Queen of the Waloffs took refuge in a village not far from Dakar. For a while she held out against signing away her rights to the French. Governor

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Faidherbe went there with a half dozen men. All the inhabitants of the place fled in terror. Finally the queen was ousted and French authority over the Waloffs was recognized by the Moors.

The Governor knew that the argument of a full stomach was stronger than persuasion by firearms. "When one can live elsewhere," he said, "one does not live in the desert." He drew up plans of settling Sahara tribes in the fertile valleys of Senegal. This time he made a mistake, as he learned later on. The natives simply preferred to live in the desert, since it was their home, and the elaborate plan of settlement in the valley turned out to be a fiasco.

At first, Faidherbe thought merely of strengthening France's possessions on the coast. But one conquest led to another, and each new bulwark gained needed the added security of another. From his own experience, Faidherbe learned about the principle of "spontaneous expansion." Once started on the imperial road, there was no stopping, as each new victory forced him onward.

When Faidherbe reached the limits of Senegal, he found himself faced with the compelling vastness of Africa. Now he entered upon a new stage of his career. He came to believe that in Africa his own France would find the solution of her great problem in the struggle for existence in over-

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crowded Europe. "Other colonies give us their products," he said, "this one will give us men." Faidherbe saw clearly that Nature's own road into the heart of Africa was the Senegal River.

"Black Senegalists," Faidherbe orated at a distribution of prizes to native children, "take the idea to heart that we are to become your masters—the benefactors of this country. You'll be crushed if you resist!" He was addressing all Africa.

The competition for colonies became keener among the Great Powers. Again at their head stood Great Britain, possessor of the best parts of tropical Africa. There was a limit to what England wanted to gain, but that limit had not yet been reached. Faidherbe was not the man to follow any master; his competitive zeal was aroused. Although he served a democratic republic, his was the temperament of an autocrat. He was France in this part of the world, and he would not tolerate any country to take precedence over her.

Each Great Power was pushing onward, but vast white spots were still to be seen on the map. No country had yet occupied the heart of Africa. Only the boldest and the most alert could penetrate into the deep interior. The road was still open to the far coast of the African vastness. Faidherbe decided that he and his own countrymen must get to the



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Indian Ocean before the English did. But the road was long, and unforeseen obstacles arose.

He proceeded a certain distance, then settled down to fortify his position, so as not to be cut off in the rear. He reached the boundaries of Senegal and arrived in the foothills of the unexplored Tamba-Ura Mountains. This was the rich country of the Bambuk in the Sudan, which had long guinea-grass, fruits, millet, corn and rice. At the town of Medine on the Senegal River, Faidherbe built a fort. He was just in time because this part of Black Africa arose against the white intruder.

### A FANATIC EMPEROR

The leader of Black Africa was a Toucouleur Negro, who had just returned from Mecca, the most sacred shrine of Islam, full of ambition to promote the religion of Mohammed and, incidentally, to build an empire of his own before the white man had taken firm root. He was El-Hadj-Omar, and he was bent on welding together the hundreds of small kingdoms in the great bend of the Niger River, most of which were devoted to the idolatry of animism. This fanatic *marabout*—religious teacher—was ready to

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co-operate with the whites, if they were willing to promote his scheme. Since they were unwilling to do so, he declared a holy war against the infidel, and promised the bliss of paradise to all warriors fallen in his cause. At his word of command, the steppe and the savannah went wild. The tam-tams of the black emperor's recruiting agents resounded throughout the Sudan. Toucoulaurs and Peuhls flocked to his colors, since the promise of plunder and salvation was irresistible. The bush country was alive again with the old warlike spirit. Europe was represented as intent on ousting Islam and forcing Christianity upon the natives. Fire and blood were to mark every inch of its march.

In the heart of the aroused country stood Medine's fort, garrisoned by seven white men and a handful of natives, commanded by Paul Holle, a mulatto trader. In the Spring of 1857 the water was low in the Senegal, as it always is toward the end of the dry season. This was Omar's chance to strike, since relief could not reach Holle by water. He besieged the fort of Medine with a huge force of 20,000 fanatic natives. The sheer weight of numbers almost cracked the gates open, but the fort had sturdy defences and the commander had a stout heart. "Black men will never enter a white man's house by force," Holle shouted, "you sons of rotten dogs!"

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The rainy season began in due course, but the soil was thirsty, and the river remained low. Faidherbe attempted to skirt the rocks in the bed of the Senegal, but his boats came to grief. In the fort itself food, but for the iron ration, was running short, then ran out. Disease killed off many defenders, but Holle kept hope burning in the survivors. The prospect of easy victory attracted thousands of additional black warriors. Even the ammunition of the defenders had to be rationed. The rains gradually filled up the river, and once again Faidherbe attempted to reach the besieged fort. This time he succeeded. So great was the Governor's name that the native besiegers lost heart when they heard about his arrival. Omar was beaten off. Holle had held out for a full hundred days. The epic of Medine became an important chapter in French colonial history.

But Omar was not vanquished altogether; he survived this loss of face. Loudly he proclaimed that the campaign had been lost because sinful Moslems had eaten forbidden meat and drunk forbidden wine. The scapegoats died on the branches of trees, and Omar continued to rule in the Niger bend, still trying desperately to create a great Negro empire of the faithful. But his day of glory did not last long. Irresistibly Faidherbe pushed onward, bridged the gap between the two great rivers, the Senegal and Niger. An-

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other great natural waterway was now at his disposal. True, it curved toward the south where the English were entrenched, but the Niger traversed a country which shot off natural routes toward the rising sun. Lake Chad called from a distance, and it was the center of many roads. Moving southward, Faïdherbe also conquered the country between the Senegal and British Gambia.

His subordinates called him *la vieille mommie*—the old mummy—although he was no more than forty-two. His aquiline nose would not have been out of place on the face of a dead Pharaoh. Sometimes he seemed as lifeless as the Sahara, except for his searching eyes. In those eyes there was fever, and the sun had tanned his skin into a grained leather. Very old in appearance, a young man in years, he was at the apex of his career. When he left Africa the preliminary work had been accomplished, and the outlines now had to be filled in. A long and distinguished career was still ahead of him in Northern Africa and in the unfortunate war against the Prussians in 1870.

Now it was one section of Africa that conquered other regions. Faïdherbe was right: "The Senegal will give men to France!" It was Senegalese troops that conquered the Niger country, east and north of Lake Chad, the geographical center of North-Central Africa.

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The son of El-Hadj-Omar, Ahmadu, was the *almany* (king) of a large part of this country. He was less ferocious than his father but just as shrewd. He pretended friendship for the invaders, then sabotaged them through procrastination. Captain Joseph S. Galliéni was charged with exploring the country with a view to building a railway. During the World War he was to play an important part in the defense of Paris.

Ahmadu tried his hand at diplomacy, playing the British against the French. He offered to sign a pact with the English, placing his country under their protection. But they had decided that France, of all the colonial Powers, would be their best neighbor. Having the most profitable regions and strategically the most useful positions, they decided that the French might as well fill up the gaps, so as to stabilize conditions in tropical Africa. Galliéni was a match for Ahmadu and forced him to come to terms. The uncanny man wriggled out of the treaty, but luck forsook him and he lost everything in one disastrous skirmish after another.

### THE STORY OF SAMORY

In 1881 the French encountered a much more dangerous enemy. He was Samory, a Malinké Negro, as fantastic a

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figure as French West Africa has ever produced. Little is known about his early youth. But it is certain that he was a poor peddler in the native village of Sanonkoro, not far from Medine. He was eighteen when, one day, after his return to the family hut, he found that his mother had disappeared. He traced her to the court of the native king, Sori Ibrahima, where she served as a slave. When Samory asked for the return of his mother, the chieftain demanded of him: "How does thou want to ransom her?" And the young boy boldly answered: "By fighting for thee in war."

For seven years, seven months and seven days—the native chroniclers say—Samory served the king so well that he advanced to an important position in his army. He aroused the attention of the neighboring King of Tourou, who offered him the command of his armed forces. Samory accepted. First he took his mother back to their village. Then he started to work in the service of his new master. So distinguished was that service that he succeeded his former lord. Now Samory himself was a chieftain, no less a ruler than Sori Ibrahima. This was Samory's chance to take revenge for his mother's capture. He deposed his former master and seized his country. Now one of the most powerful native kings, he embraced Islam, and began building up a large army of his own.

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The story which may have been legend so far, now becomes history. The French were fighting Samory for full fifteen years. Never before did they face as dangerous a foe in the heart of Africa.

Samory was impressive and good-looking, tall, thin, with a strong chin, bright eyes, and an air of repose and gentleness. Yet few native kings were more cruel than he. He read the Mohammedan's Holy Script, the Koran, in his free time, and kept on killing people when busy. He killed friend and enemy alike—anyone who ever dared raise his voice in his exalted presence. He usually carried a fly-swatter with a silver-handle, and when he raised it the executioners knew that the man in front of him was doomed.

Samory was really a wholesale slave-trader for the Moorish merchants of the desert, the famous explorer of the Ivory Coast, Captain Louis Gustave Binger, asserted. He made captives and specialized in children. Several travelers have left us accounts of little children in chains marching in single file across the desert, carrying small bundles on top of their heads—all their belongings. Captain Galliéni himself witnessed such a march and he recorded in his diary that he never again hoped to see a similar sight. Those of the children whom Samory could not sell, he simply killed. He

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also killed adult slaves who were too thin or weak. Rows of skeletons littered the route taken by his army. He killed his own soldiers, too, when they had been rendered useless in battle.

The French tried to crush him as they had vanquished other Negro strong men, but found Samory impossible to defeat. He eluded the French armed forces, transferred his troops and capital hundreds of miles away. Again only rotting skeletons marked the march of horror. From the Middle Niger bend he moved to the remote country of the Kung, just north of the impenetrable forest belt. When the enemy caught up with him, he simply moved into Liberia. He bought arms and ammunition from other countries and also, it is said, from French traders. He managed to get arms as long as he had money, and if he ran short of gold, helpless merchant caravans provided the cash.

For years and years this game of hide-and-seek continued. Meanwhile Samory's name became known throughout the world. His uncanny success in eluding the French gained him fame as an invincible warrior. During all those years he was the perennial problem of French West Africa. Sometimes he would keep quiet, as if taking a rest. Then again he would cause havoc, like a volcano in eruption. Again he



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became unusually active in the late nineties of the last century.

Now he was operating in the border country of Guinea, where his elusive game was even simpler, because there three territories met: French West Africa, British Sierra Leone and the Republic of Liberia. When hard pressed on French-occupied soil, he vanished into one of the other countries. One day in 1898 he was resting in what is described in contemporary records as "the village of his wives." Lying on a sofa in the open, he was reading the Koran, as was his custom. A detachment of Senegalese *tirailleurs*, under the command of a white sergeant, appeared suddenly. His bodyguard was taken completely by surprise. Seeing the enemy, the king leaped to his feet and began to run, trying to reach his horses. "Ilo, ilo, Samory!" (Halt, halt, Samory!) his pursuers shouted, but he kept on running. The race was unequal, and finally he fell to the ground, exhausted. In no time the *tirailleurs* were on top of him. In his high-pitched voice he asked them to kill him on the spot. Probably he was afraid of being tortured, as his victims had been so often.

Meanwhile the bodyguard recovered its spirits. Their master was brought back into the village, the prisoner of *tirailleurs*. The bodyguard outnumbered the pursuers, but

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the white sergeant held his pistol at Samory's temple. The king, deciding on the spur of the moment, that life was sweet, gave his men orders not to shoot. He was sent first to Kayes, the important railway town on the Senegal, and from there to Saint-Louis. He was told there that he would be exiled to Gabon in French Equatorial Africa. He lost his nerve and tried to kill himself with a knife. Taken quickly to a hospital, white physicians used all their skill to save his life. He recovered and was lavish with praise and thanks. The experience of saving an enemy's life was new to him. He was taken to Dakar, led on board the ship *Tibet*, accompanied by his favorite wife, a son and his principal adviser. He was interned on an island off the coast of French Equatorial Africa. There Samory died on June 2, 1900.

### EMISSARY OF PEACE

He was still a danger when the British and French concluded a convention on August 5, 1890, designating the spheres of influence of the two countries in Central Africa. Britain received Nigeria—the best part of the Lower Niger and the sea coast. All the vast empty country north of this line was assigned to France. "The Gallic cock has plenty

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of sand to scratch," Galliéni commented. Five years before this, in February, 1885, the Powers participating in the scramble for colonies, concluded the General Act of Berlin which provided that occupation of territory in Africa was recognized only if it was effective. The object of this Act was to keep Governments from drawing lines on the map and declaring that the land beyond them belonged to their countries too.

Both the French and the English dispatched missions to determine the actual boundaries and to effect the occupation. For the French this task was entrusted to Captain Parfait-Louis Monteil. His orders were to cross Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad and thence to move on to the Mediterranean via Tripoli. He was sent as an emissary of peace and not of war. He wanted no strong armed forces, so as not to give cause for alarm among the natives, nor pretext for self-defense. On the way across half the continent he was to buy off such kings and emperors as he encountered. It was not his intent to pay high prices for fear of spoiling a buyer's market. He asked the Government merely for a force of ten colored soldiers, a non-com. and 80,000 francs. With this he set out to extend the colonial empire which Faidherbe had conceived.

On December 23, 1890, he left Kayes on the Senegal and

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headed for the Niger. He crossed it a few weeks later and found himself in the endless savannah country of the great bend. Wherever he went, he signed up the native rulers as the wards of France. Sometimes he paid no more than a franc for a thousand square miles. A veritable rush started among the native rulers for these pacts. It was better to get a franc for a tract of land than to get nothing at all.

Half-way across the continent, Captain Monteil ran into a streak of bad luck. His porters and cook had run away, his horses had died, he himself became ill with liver trouble and was hovering between life and death for days. When he recovered he tried to buy new animals, but in vain. They were not to be had for any price. Monteil made up his mind to continue his journey on foot. At long last he arrived in a friendly region and bought draft animals there. On August 19, 1891, he reached the descending arm of the river. He had crossed the bend.

Bandits infested the country he now traversed, and he was held up for money at every turn. He gave it whenever the natives seemed to be very hungry. Sometimes he showed them the ten rifles his soldiers carried. It was a year of bad crops, and starving peasants traveled for miles to ask for alms. He reached the country which is today the northern part of British Nigeria. At Sokoto he was introduced to the

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emperor, an intelligent Peuhl, who provided him with a safe conduct for the eastward trip. Monteil kept on signing treaties with the subordinate chieftains who claimed authority over the land and handed them gratuities in accordance with their importance.

Finally, he arrived at Kano, which he described as a clean and busy city, full of shrewd merchants and good artisans. Desert Tuaregs wanted to cheat him out of his camels, but he saw through their tricks and laughed at them. On April 9, 1892, he arrived at Kouka on Lake Chad. Suddenly a group of some 150 cavalymen barred his way. "All the military celebrities of the Bornu country were here," Monteil recorded, "and they wore their most fantastic costumes, such as Sarazen coats of mail with plumed helmets and heavily padded uniforms. The horses wore padded caparisons. No sooner did they see me than the entire line set in motion, and charged at me in great disorder. They surrounded me like lightning and their lances shivered not more than ten centimeters from my chest. They cried: 'Lalé Laloua,' welcome, and I answered: 'Oussé, oussé,' greetings." This was the ceremony of the Salute of Lances, a great honor to be accorded to a stranger, and also a test of his courage.

With Monteil's arrival on Lake Chad the crossing of Africa from the Atlantic to her very core was accomplished.

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He had not fired one shot, nor lost one man. Two days after his arrival he handed a letter from the French Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, Eugene Etienne, to the local Sultan. In the letter that French official conveyed the greetings of the President of the French Republic, M. Sadi Carnot. "Herewith is the message from King Carnot," Captain Monteil solemnly told the Sultan, "through the hand of Grand-Vizier Etienne." He also handed the ruler a deluxe edition of the *Thousand and One Nights*, which the Sultan appreciated greatly. He would have appreciated gold even more. He thought that a white officer bearing the letter of "King Carnot" must be laden with money and wanted to shake it out of Monteil in exchange for a safe-conduct. The haggling took months, during which the officer-explorer saw much of the country.

At last he was allowed to go northward. He crossed the Sahara through Tripoli. On December 10th, he set eyes on the Mediterranean and the French Consul General who handed him a high decoration and a commission as a colonel. The Resident General at Tunis gave him a foretaste of the honors that were in store for him at home. At Marseille the great explorer Binger himself greeted him in the name of the French Government.

The time came now to knit all French African possessions

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into one, with the exception of Somaliland on the distant Red Sea. As things stood then, the three principal regions of the overseas empire had no connection. Algeria in the north was pushing southward into the desert, while French West and French Equatorial Africa were pushing northward. The huge blank space on the map would disappear after these territories were united. The sceptics asked, of course: "If naught is added to naught, how much do we get?" But the French have orderly minds and they do not like to have countries dangle in mid-air.

France was in a hurry to effect the unification, because other countries were even in greater haste. Britain's agents were the most active, of course, in signing up chieftains for protection, dotting the country with blockhouses and establishing that "effective occupation" without which claims to Africa were invalid.

The French also wanted to make sure of their claims. In the territory around Lake Chad, which they marked on the maps as French, their rule was challenged by another of those fantastic figures that emerge occasionally in the East. He was Rabah—his full name was Rabah Zobeir—Sultan of Bornu, which Monteil crossed on his way to Lake Chad.

Emperor Rabah was originally a slave, half-Negro and half-Arab. First we hear about him moving up the chief

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western affluent of the Nile—Bahr-el-Ghazal—in the company of Miss Alexandrine Petronella Francina Tinné, another fabulous character. This young Dutch girl was the richest heiress in all the Netherlands. Not knowing what to do with her money and having an adventurous bent, she began doing the conventional thing: she went to Cairo with her mother and aunt, and from there took the usual trip to Khartoum up the Nile. There she did the unusual thing and ascended the White Nile to a point near the great slave center of Gondoroko, which was not on the itineraries of elegant tourists. Getting back to Khartoum Miss Tinné was hailed as an explorer. This was in 1860, when she was twenty-one years of age.

Now an idea came to her. She had Rabah and several other persons familiar with the region accompany her into the unmapped rountry of the Bahr-el-Ghazal. She also took along her mother and aunt. They were unequal to the wild country; the mother died on the trip and the aunt after their return to Khartoum. At this point Rabah dropped out of Miss Tinné's life. Hopelessly infatuated with Africa, she attempted to cross the Sahara desert from the Mediterranean to Lake Chad. Stories of her adventurous life had preceded her. The prowling Tuaregs had also heard about it, and when finally they met her they mistook her two



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water tanks for treasure chests. Miss Tinné was not yet thirty when she was killed by the desert tribesmen.

Meanwhile the ex-slave Rabah had joined the forces of Zobeir Rahama Pasha, the great Egyptian bandit and statesman. Zobeir claimed descent from the Prophet himself. He was engaged in the highly lucrative trade of slave-hunting in the Bahr-el-Ghazal. Although a subject of Egypt, he had raised a strong army of black men and became a dangerous rival of the Egyptian authorities. He attacked the government force sent from Khartoum into the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the commander of which was slain. Although it was definitely proven that the attack was executed by him, he disavowed all knowledge of it. The Egyptian authorities, acting upon the principle that it was better to have such a dangerous man on their side, appointed him Governor of the Bahr-el-Ghazal. He promptly made himself independent. The more obnoxious he became the higher he rose in the Egyptian army.

He committed the great imprudence of visiting Cairo. He was received with the high honors due his exalted station, but was prevented from returning to the south. His son Suleiman carried on, and Rabah, the ex-slave, was his commander-in-chief. The two of them continued slave-trading,

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and flouted the authority of the Khedive, the Egyptian ruler. The English were operating then in the Sudan, which later they were to take over. General Charles George Gordon, Governor General of the Sudan, was determined to clean up the Bahr-el-Ghazal, which was part of the country under his nominal rule. He sent the energetic Romolo Gessi Pasha against the two men. In July, 1879, Rabah was routed and he fled with some 700 slave soldiers. Now began the famous trek which made him almost as notorious as Samory himself was to become.

Rabah moved west, and by crossing the imaginary boundary of Sudan found himself in the Wadai, which was then a native Sultanate, and is now a part of French Equatorial Africa. Complete chaos prevailed in this part of the endless country. The grabbing contest of the Great Powers had wrought havoc in the political structure of the native States. It was a free-for-all fight and only the strongest had a chance of victory. Rabah was the strongest, and he ruthlessly dethroned several native kings.

The country was poor. So he moved southwestward, reaching Bagirmi, which is as rich a territory as any in Central Africa. The French were trying to get it, too, and sent a mission there, headed by Paul Crampel. Rabah had him

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killed, looted as much of the country as he could, then continued westward, skirting Lake Chad, and finally turned south. Now he appeared in the State of Bornu, whose Sultan he overthrew. The British had preceded him and Rabah had to be content with their protection. He cherished the idea of creating a large empire in the no man's land between the French and English spheres of influence. He speculated that these two Great Powers might welcome a neutral country between them, serving as a buffer State.

Again Rabah continued westward, but the British beat him to it. Then he lashed out eastward with the agility for which he was dreaded. Again he tried to consolidate his power at Bagirmi, but his calculations went wrong. Neither the English nor the French wanted to have a neutral buffer State. The Government in Paris thought the time opportune to take action against him. Emile Gentile was given a military mission to go into the Congo region of Central Africa, consolidate French power in the key country of Bagirmi and establish contact with the two other military missions, one moving south from Algeria under command of Fernand Foureau and Commandant Lamy, and the other moving west, commanded by Captain Voulet and Lieutenant, later Captain, Chanoine.

## THE FATE OF AN OUTLAW

This last-named military expedition was by far the largest of all three. It consisted of some 600 combatants, 800 porters, and several hundred camp-followers—altogether about 1,700 persons. In a country where food and water were so scarce such a large force was a veritable scourge to the peaceful natives.

This unwieldy column required five months to cover 600 kilometers. The population looked with awe at this swarm of locusts and was not always friendly. Villages which failed to extend the expected welcome were burned down by order of Captain Voulet. Countless inhabitants were killed, their bodies dumped into wells or hanged on trees.

Lieutenant Peteau, one of the officers in charge of an infantry detachment, did not like these goings-on. He lost his way on purpose, and notified the colonial authorities at Saint-Louis about the curious conduct of his superior. The authorities thereupon sent an experienced colonial officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Klobb, to investigate the charges and to assume command if he found them justified. Accompanied by only thirty native *tirailleurs*, Klobb left the town of Say on the Niger on June 12, 1899. He found Voulet's track

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easily. It was marked by villages in ashes and dead bodies. On July 8th, Klobb approached the main body of the column and sent a letter to Voulet by four men, announcing his arrival. Two days later Voulet received the letter. He answered it promptly and curtly: "Keep away or I'll shoot!" The men carrying the answer got lost and Klobb never received it.

It was on the 14th of July, Bastille Day, national holiday of France, that Klobb overtook Voulet's forces east of the Niger. Klobb was within sight, and Voulet sent him a message repeating his threat: "If you don't return I'll shoot!" Klobb shrugged his shoulders, saying: "Voulet is going mad." But he refused to take the threat seriously. He went straight ahead to meet his subordinate officer. At 400 feet Voulet ordered his soldiers to shoot. They missed their mark, and Klobb continued on his way. At eighty meters Voulet again ordered his soldiers to shoot, and Klobb fell, dead.

Voulet joined Chanoine and two other officers to whom he declared: "Now I am an outlaw. I have no family, no country. I am no longer a Frenchman; I am a black chief-tain. We'll make a black African Empire. They cannot get hold of me. They would need 10,000 men and 20,000,000 francs to do that. This man wanted to rob me of the re-

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sults of two years of hard work. I am a young officer and I must make my career."

Then he addressed the native sergeants: "You are no longer French soldiers. You are great black chiefs. You'll never see the Sudan, but you'll be very rich." The sergeants listened to him impassively. Chanoine called the medicine men and let them intone the praises of Voulet, who compared him to Samory. The other officers did not dare to move. They were 600 miles away from the nearest army post.

Just the same, the sergeants did not like Voulet's talk and they ran away before the night was over. In the morning Chanoine picked up their track, but they shot him before he could grasp his pistol, and he fell from his horse, dead.

Voulet, sensing danger, ran in the opposite direction with a young native woman. He changed his mind suddenly, turned back and approached the camp. The sentinel, not knowing what to do, turned to ask the sergeant. Voulet fired at the sentinel, but missed him. The sentinel returned the fire, and he hit the captain.

His comrades diagnosed Voulet's ailment: "Sudanitis." He had been known as an able officer, that is why he was entrusted with the execution of such an important task.

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The tropical sun, parasites, fever, thirst affected his mind, and he had gone stark mad.

The column did not break up, and two other officers assumed command. The Frenchman's remarkable gift for improvisation was demonstrated anew in this desolate spot of Africa. On April 22, 1900, the three military missions met. After some inconclusive skirmishes they forced a showdown with Rabah and defeated him. The chieftain's head was severed from his body and taken into the French camp. His three sons continued the struggle for a short time, but they were all defeated and slain. The three French Africas were united on the map, but they retained their individualities as Algeria, French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa.

Then the French proceeded to strengthen the weak spots. They cleaned out Mauretania, the desert country, north of the Senegal River. It was a nest of marauding nomads who confused patriotism with banditry. While much work was done there, Mauretania still remains the most turbulent region of French West Africa.

The territories were either placed under military rule or were administered from Senegal. Gradually the French transformed the many "protectorates" into colonies. The countless emperors, kings and sultans were no longer recog-

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nized as sovereign rulers, although they continued to maintain their status as native chiefs. Slavery was abolished officially in 1901 in the newly acquired interior of the colony. In practice this meant that slave-raids were forbidden, but the institution itself could not be eradicated. Now, as before, domestic slavery flourishes wherever a native can afford to hold other natives in bondage.

In 1922 French West Africa was divided into eight colonies. The Governor General became the head of the entire administration. In 1933 the colony of Haute-Volta was merged with the adjacent colonies of Sudan, Niger and Dahomey. The communes with full powers, Dakar and Gorée, Rufisque and Saint-Louis, were granted recognition equal to that of French territory, and those born in them are French citizens. They sent a deputy to the Chamber of Deputies in Paris while it was in existence. One of the deputies, Blaise Diagne, particularly distinguished himself and became Under-Secretary of State for Colonies. Thus a colored person achieved ministerial status in the French Government.

## THE END OF AN ERA

Years of quiet development followed, interrupted by the First World War. French West Africa contributed more



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than her share of blood. It was then that the average Frenchman at home began to realize the importance of the African tropics for his nation. In the Treaty of Versailles, French West Africa gained a territory of 21,893 square miles—the larger part of Togoland, between the British-controlled Gold Coast and the Dahomey part of French West Africa. For more than a quarter of a century Togoland had belonged to Germany. She was a fairly valuable acquisition, although in her northern part she was so primitive that natives still used poisoned arrows. She produced small quantities of palm oil and kernels, kola-nuts, cocoa, cotton and rubber. The Germans continued to claim her and the French continued to remind them that at the very height of colonial prosperity, two years before the outbreak of the First World War, all of Togoland's exports did not amount to more than \$2,500,000 and all her imports did not exceed \$3,000,000—less than the proverbial drop in the bucket of German trade. They were also reminded of the fact that Togoland was not evidently a good German *Lebensraum*, since only 327 Germans lived in the entire colony in the year before the war.

Nothing was heard about Germany's claim to Togoland after the defeat of France. The Germans were interested in much bigger game than this hot colony. The suspicion grew

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that part of the bargain between the Vichy Government and the German rulers was this deep silence about the lost colonies.

A month after the *débâcle* the French Government created a High Commissariat for all French Africa, and the Governor General of French West Africa, Pierre Boisson, was appointed High Commissioner. In August, 1940, nearly all of French Equatorial Africa declared herself for the Free French.

On December 14, 1940, the official gazette of the colony, *Journal Officiel de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, published a decree prohibiting the transmission and listening in public to "Britannic broadcasting stations and in general to all stations broadcasting anti-national propaganda." French Africa was thus *gleichgeschaltet*, and only the German-inspired propaganda of the French official radio and the Axis propaganda of the Third Reich and of Italy could be heard.

The *Journal Officiel* dropped the words *République Française, Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* from the top of its first page, beginning with the February 15, 1941, issue, and replaced them by the words *État Français*—French State—in bolder type. This momentous change was not accompanied by one word of explanation even. The French Re-

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public was now dead overseas, yet it had never been defeated. It was not the Germans who killed her, but Frenchmen. They had sold out overseas France for money, power or public office.

"Laws" continued to be published in the official gazette, but they were laws only in name, since no legislative body elected by the people passed them. The formula for the promulgation of these so-called laws was: *Nous, Maréchal de France, Chef d'État . . . Décretons. . . .* We, Marshal of France, Chief of State . . . Decree. They were signed: Philippe Pétain.

A "French Legion of War Veterans of Black Africa" was formed, in accordance with a decree published in the February 22, 1941, issue of the official gazette. Its object was to rally all war veterans to the High Commissariat of French Africa and to the "French State." Their collaboration was to be secured in the communes, subdivisions, government circles, colonies and territories of the High Commissariat. In this respect Black Africa showed the way to White France. There, only as late as the end of summer of 1941, an officially recognized war veterans' organization, the French Legion, was ordered to replace all political parties by Marshal Pétain's edict.

Paradoxically, racial laws were introduced into French

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Africa, but they affected only the Jews, and not the colored people. Thus the Jews were to be treated as inferior to the Negroes. The French *Herrenvolk* began to build up a racial hierarchy. This removed the foundations of the French overseas empire which had grown great because of its valuable contributions to a full understanding of the peoples of all colors and creeds.



## *V. The Trans-Saharan Railway*

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### TWO AFRICAS

THE COUNTRY WHICH Dakar serves is French tropical Africa. Although it lies on the same continent as French North Africa, it had no connection with it for a long time. Now the airplane and the bus link them up. In the middle of March, 1941, the French Government signed a decree for the construction of the "Mediterranean-Niger Railway System," the Trans-Saharan Railroad. Work on the line was promptly started. A plan, conceived long ago, has come to fruition. The two Africas of France are to be united at long last. The change will affect Dakar and French West Africa. It is bound fundamentally to affect the strategical importance of the entire African "bulge."

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Disregarding Somaliland on the Red Sea, of importance mostly as the terminus of the railway into Ethiopia, and the vast Island of Madagascar, off the East African coast, all the French African possessions are situated in the western portion of the continent and from there they overflow into the eastern part. On the map this looks like a closed and homogeneous mass of land, extending uninterruptedly, but for the foreign enclaves on the coast, all the way from the Mediterranean in the north to the Gulf of Guinea in the south, some three thousand miles away. In reality it is nothing of the kind. This mass of land consists of two entirely distinct territories, as different in every respect as any two African territories can be.

The north is part of White Africa and the south is part of Black Africa. Between the two there is the desert. What strikes the eye here is that the sea—the Mediterranean—does not divide two civilizations. Europe and Northern Africa are on two continents and yet they have essentially the same civilization—the white man's. On the other hand, Northern Africa and tropical Africa are on the same continent and yet they belong to entirely different worlds.

French Northern Africa has a population of 16,000,000, living in Algeria, Tunis and Morocco. Algeria is treated as an organic part of France. Tunis, on the other hand, is

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a protectorate, having a native ruler of her own. That makes very little difference in the status of this country, except in name. Morocco is a protectorate, too, and she is also the most recent acquisition of France in Northern Africa. A small strip of land across from the Spanish peninsula is a protectorate of Spain. The French enjoy special rights in the region which the Spanish Government is supposed to protect.

The history of Northern Africa was much more part of European history in classical times than was England's and Germany's, for instance. Even then the Mediterranean was not a dividing line. On the contrary, it was a uniting force. Carthage sought to ignore it altogether in extending her sway over the European countries of the Mediterranean. North Africa was Rome's granary for many years. The sea was no obstacle to the barbarians, either. They settled on the northern coast as well as on the southern shores. When the Arabs came centuries later, they, too, settled on both banks. After their downfall, it was the Turks who held sway here, nominally at least, and they were followed by native rulers. This was the home of the Barbary pirates who came into conflict with the young United States.

The people of North Africa are of mixed Arab and

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Berber stock—Semitic and Hamitic groups. In the course of their varied history they have received new blood from all parts of the Mediterranean basin and countries far beyond. Typical specimens of the so-called Nordic race are not rare. There has also been some admixture of Negro blood, but not much.

Between the two Africas lies the Sahara desert. It is the largest wasteland in the world, covering some 3,500,000 square miles, a territory larger than the entire area of the United States. Its greatest length from east to west is 3,200 miles, and its breadth varies from 800 to 1,400 miles. Most of it is a country of rocks and pebbles, which the natives call *hamadas* and *regs*. There are large sand deserts, called *erg* or *igidi*. Today it is no longer believed that the Sahara is the bottom of a former sea because the sand found there is too young. Marine sand is the product of an older age. Rather, it is believed that the Ice Age was responsible for the formation of the Sahara. In that era this part of Africa had a moderate and moist climate. After the ice had receded, the soil lost its moisture. Vegetation decayed, the ground became eroded and a dust bowl was formed. Our own experience shows that deterioration of the soil does not take long.



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The Sahara is a low plateau, broken up by hills and mountains, the tallest of which is 8,800 feet. Characteristic are the *wadis*—dry rivers. They fill with water after a downpour; then they empty quickly, losing their moisture to the sand and air. Some of them form veritable systems, brooks emptying into rivers, which in turn join larger streams, that flow into still larger ones. They are phantom rivers, because they have no water, except on rare occasions.

Not one river succeeds in breaking through the Western Sahara. The Senegal and the Niger are the rivers farthest north. The Niger is merely a visitor on the outskirts of the desert, bringing there the tropical waters of the south, then carrying them again southward. The Nile is the only river which crashes through the sand barricade, carrying life and civilization into Egypt.

The Sahara contains no riches, to our best knowledge. It has date palms and salt. Local folklore has handed down memories of vegetable butter and copper. Life in the desert is confined to the oases around the wells. They are fairly frequent in some parts, and almost entirely absent for hundreds of square miles.

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### DESERT ROADS

Between north and south across the Sahara there are six principal routes on French soil. The westernmost one begins in Southern Morocco on the Atlantic. Then, running parallel to the sea at a considerable distance inland, it curves again toward it, ending at the estuary of the Senegal River.

As soon as it reaches the desert section of French West Africa, this road branches off and, skirting some vicious sand country, runs into an oasis. This route is for local use.

Both the main route and the branch are among the least satisfactory Sahara roads. They are subject to *razzias*—raids—by tribesmen who operate usually out of that vast nothing, the name of which sounds like a mockery—Rio de Oro, River of Gold. It is owned but not controlled by Spain. Although no benefit accrues to Spain from it, she clings to it as a matter of prestige. There is no worse spot in all Africa. Time and again the French Government has requested Spanish permission to eradicate this danger to Trans-Sahara travel. All it has asked was the right to pursue raiders into the territory controlled by Spain. There police authority has broken down completely, and raiders are safe. But the Spaniards have always refused, and for

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no other reason than that such outside police aid would reflect on their own colonial fame.

The next route to the east is a short-cut between Eastern Morocco and the end of the Sahara at Timbuktu on the Niger River. It crosses some of the hottest country in Africa and skirts more sand than any other route. It is used by merchants in a hurry and by the desert police. Its terminus, Timbuktu, is "the meeting point of the camel and the canoe." Timbuktu is also called "the port of the Sahara in the Sudan." The town is the largest caravan center of the desert, and it has a long and sad history, the tragedy of which is revealed in the name of one of its districts: "God hears not"—Ur-immandess.

Almost midway in French Africa runs the route which has been selected for the Trans-Saharan, and which will be described in its place. East of it is the busiest of all desert routes, beginning at Touggourt, which is the southern terminus of the Algerian railway out of Philippeville on the Mediterranean, and serving Constantine and Biskra, two of the largest centers of French Africa. The route then follows the line of wells and hills. This road is dotted with oases, and it has the least contact with sand among all the desert routes. Half-way down, it crosses the Hoggar country, which is the home of the people of the veil, the Tuaregs.

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Early intrusions on this road were punished by death, as several graves bear witness. At the wells of Bir-el-Gharama is the tomb of F. X. Flatters, leader of an early mission. His men wanted to use the waterholes, but the natives objected. Here are also the graves of Father de Foucauld and General Laperrine, killed by the Tuaregs.

Artesian wells have been drilled and police operations extended. In the Winter months the *Société Algérienne des Transports Tropicaux* operates buses on this "Hoggar track" to the oases of Tamarasset in the mountain country, and all the way to the caravan junction point of Zinder and Lake Chad.

## THE RAILWAY ACROSS THE SAHARA

For long the idea of a Trans-Saharan railway has been broached. Many arguments have been advanced: political, strategical, social and economic. "Empires have fallen because of the lack of connection with the mother country," said Marshal Franchet d'Espérey, commander-in-chief at Salonika during the First World War. "The Trans-Saharan must be built and quickly, at that," said Marshal Joseph Joffre. "We owe it to French Africa to assure her unity. Only the railway can accomplish that; only it can realize

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the full value of the immense territories of the Sudan and Niger, which can give us all the wealth we need."

French Africa was not united, these advocates of the plan said, no matter what the coloring of the maps showed. Black Africa was a highly treasured part of overseas France because of her man power. In the modern world rapidity of movement may mean everything. No matter how good the Senegalese soldiers were, they simply did not count if they were immobilized in isolated country.

How long did it take for a Negro soldier to reach his fighting unit in France? First, he had to be brought to the nearest railway, which could be hundreds of miles away. To reach it, he had to walk, or use native transportation. If he was lucky, he got to one of the three navigable sectors of the Niger. If there was enough water in the Senegal, he could sail down it by steamer.

Once he reached the railway, it required several days to get to the seaport: Dakar or some terminal on the Gulf of Guinea. From there he had to be transported by boat all around the huge African bulge past Gibraltar into the Mediterranean, or up the coast of Portugal and Spain to a French harbor. In the open ocean he was exposed, of course, to enemy raiders and submarines. From the day he left his hut in the interior to the day he reached his train-

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ing camp in France, a full month could have elapsed.

This may have meant that France was cheated out of the advantages of having such an excellent reservoir of soldiers in tropical Africa. This may also have meant the difference between victory and defeat.

Large bodies of soldiers, running into hundreds of thousands, could not be transported by airplane or in buses. The only way to transport them was by rail. The advantage of having the Trans-Saharan would have been in this case that the black soldier could have reached his training camp in less than a week. He would not have been exposed to enemy attack on the high seas. Vital raw materials of war would also reach the mother country quickly and safely. "African France" would be a fact and not an empty phrase.

Assuming that trouble broke out in tropical French Africa, how could it be dealt with? the advocates of the cross-desert railway asked. For many years there has been no trouble there, it is true, but that did not exempt the authorities from exercising precaution. Meanwhile, a fairly large force was immobilized in black Africa. It cost money and yet would have been inadequate to cope with a real danger. "The rail is preferable to the cannon," said Colonel Thys, builder of the Congo Railway, "because it carries farther."

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The economic arguments were equally strong. "Only 1 percent of all our cotton comes from our colonies," Deputy Edouard de Warren, president of the Trans-Sahara Committee said in an address at Nancy on March 13, 1929. "Only 4 percent of our wool comes from our colonies. We import two billions' worth of silk and about one half of one percent—eleven millions—originates in our own colonies. They supply us with only 3 percent of our coffee imports."

Life springs along railway tracks. Empty stretches are peopled, and the mobility of labor increases. The example of the United States shows this beyond a doubt. In Africa, too, this has been the experience. The line from Dakar to Saint-Louis now runs through well-settled regions. It was empty before the railway came. The line from Dakar to the Niger is filling up. It now crosses some of the best peanut-producing country of Africa. When no railway was there, it was empty space.

Vast tracts of the Niger valley are potentially rich. "We could open up a country twelve times the size of France to our trade," said Deputy de Warren. "We would create a domestic market far superior to our foreign market. Vast lands that are worth nothing today may be worth thousands of francs per acre a quarter of a century hence."

The Niger could be turned into another Nile with the

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aid of the prosperity the railway would bring. Cotton and grain could be grown on a profitable scale. Huge fields of alfalfa could be raised; minerals would be found. In the estimate of Maire-Devallon, Inspector General of Public Works in the Colonies, tropical Africa could produce at least 60,000 tons of meat products for France. She could supply her with kapok and gum, sugar cane and fruits. In the very first year of the operation of the railway, north-bound traffic alone would amount to 285,000 tons.

The railway would attract more labor, and the annual migration of French West African natives to the plantations of British Nigeria would stop. Medicines could be made more easily available to the villages and health measures more rigidly enforced. The dry air of the tamed desert may mean life for pulmonary patients. The Sahara might vie with Nevada in attracting tourists.

The enemies of the Trans-Sahara project have also included some of the greatest names. Their objections have been many. In the age of airplanes, they said, one does not build railways across the desert. Where airplanes may fail, the buses would help, and they are less expensive than railways. Coming down to technical details, they declared: One cannot build on shifting sand. Even if it were possible to lay rails on nothing, it would be impossible to



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obtain labor. Were it possible to get labor it would be impossible to provision it. The lines would be in constant danger of destruction. How could a line of such length be policed in this frightful country? Tribesmen come and tribesmen go, but the sand does not preserve their footprints. The desert is full of superstitions, and the natives may consider the railway Satan's own handiwork, which it is their duty to destroy. How could the trains obtain water? Even if all these difficulties could be overcome, the line would not be profitable. It is not true that the two Africas are complementary. North Africa is looking toward Europe, her best market. French tropical Africa, on the other hand, is looking toward Dakar and the Atlantic. Passenger traffic would be insignificant. The native would not take the train for pleasure and pay thousands of francs for the privilege, where he has not even a red farthing to his name. Salesmen would not overrun the desert trying to sell the tribesmen high-powered motor cars. Freight service on the line would be justified only if mass products could be shipped. Rubber and cotton would be such products, but tropical Africa has not demonstrated her ability to produce them on a commercial scale. Even the line from Dakar to the Niger carries no more than one train a week in each direction—the critics pointed out—

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and it crosses a territory that is more populous and infinitely richer than the desert.

In spite of all these objections, plans have been made for a long time to build a railway across the Sahara. As far back as 1879, Civil Engineer Duponcher prepared plans for the building of a railway from the Mediterranean to the Niger. It was in order to test its feasibility that the French Government sent an expedition into the Sahara headed by Colonel Paul Flatters. He penetrated far into Algeria. He had the bad luck of striking a spot inhabited by an exceptionally aggressive group of Tuaregs. They resented the intrusion. A fight developed; Colonel Flatters was killed.

France was shocked and the enemies of the plan gained the upper hand. It was nearly a half century later that the idea was broached again. The Government of Premier Raymond Poincaré appointed a commission to study the question. This was in 1928, when France was getting ready to insure the permanence of the order created at Versailles. Primarily, the Trans-Saharan Railway was to serve strategic purposes. Three committees studied the economic, financial and political aspects of the problem. They submitted a report, which favored the plan. The army approved the project.

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Once more opposition arose, voicing the well-known arguments, and a new one as well. The Trans-Saharan was nothing more, the opponents said, than a scheme of the steel trust, *Comité des Forges*, to win new contracts. The steel trust was the *bête noire* of that era. Anything it liked was doomed at once. The ruling party was then the Radical Socialist group which dominated the Chamber of Deputies in co-operation with groups of similar persuasion. The question of the Trans-Saharan was placed on the agenda of the party Congress in 1934, and the vote on it was adverse. Again the plan was dropped.

Meanwhile a machine had conquered the desert; that machine was the automobile. Its success was chalked up against the railway. It was General Estienne who suggested that the crossing of the Sahara should be attempted in specially designed motor cars. His suggestion was accepted by André Citroën, "the Henry Ford of France." He had several caterpillar cars of a special design built. They were small but sturdy, built for endurance and not luxury. On December 17, 1922, a caravan of five cars left Touggourt in Western Algeria under the leadership of Messieurs Haardt and Audoin-Dubreuil. It followed the camel route across the Hoggar Mountains. The trip was uneventful. On January 8, 1923, the caravan arrived at Bourem on the

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Niger. From there it proceeded to Timbuktu, farther west. It followed the same route on the return journey.

France hailed the expedition as one more manifestation of national genius. One of the caterpillar cars was placed on permanent exhibition in the Museum of War of the Palace of the Invalides to keep the company of one of the famous taxis which helped to save Paris at the Battle of the Marne in 1914.

In spite of the success of this expedition, the Hoggar trail appeared too dangerous for a routine undertaking. The brothers Georges and René Estienne decided to try a more westerly route, from Morocco to the Niger. They, too, arrived safely.

Then it was found that while well suited to desert travel, the caterpillar cars were not fast enough. They were discarded, and an experiment was made with twin-tire cars. They more than justified the highest expectations. Driving from Colomb-Béchar, at the southern end of the railway line in Algeria, to Bourem on the Niger, M. Boureil crossed the desert in six days. The terrors of the desert vanished. "The Sahara has become a grandiose automobile road," a Paris paper exulted. The more successful the motor cars, the dimmer grew the chances of the railway.

In the last days of March of 1941 a decree appeared in

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the Official Journal of France under the signature of Marshal Pétain, authorizing the construction of a normal-gauge railway, to be known as the "Mediterranean-Nigerian System." The amount of five billion francs was appropriated for costs. The authoritarian régime needed no legislative approval. The government-controlled press—and the entire press was then either government or German-controlled—gave praise to the plan. "The country had to sustain a defeat in order that the empire should appear to all Frenchmen what it really is: the reservoir of national resources and the prolongation of our national territory on a neighboring continent," *Le Temps* wrote. "By means of this railroad Europe will be brought nearer to Africa, opening up the immense continent. . . . The Trans-Saharan Railway is a work of peace. It will be to the honor of France to have laid its foundations."

The projected line follows the route over which M. Boureil drove his car in six days from Colomb-Béchar in Algeria to Bourem on the Niger. Leaving Colomb-Béchar, which is in a hilly country, the line descends to the Sahara level, which is about a thousand feet. It skirts the sand land of the western *erg*—sand-dune district—and follows the embankment of a large dry river-bed. Then the route plunges into the rocky passage of two sand deserts,

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right into the populous oasis-town of Beni Abbes. From there the road crosses the western Tanezruft, which the natives call "the emptiest thing in the world," a desert within the desert. For thousands of square miles it is just a vast emptiness, with no well, no oasis, no human habitation. But it does contain the bones of dead camels, baked hard by the infernal heat.

From the terminus on the Niger, the route branches off, westward into Segou, where it will connect with the railway line to Dakar, and eastward to Niamey, where an airline is already in operation to Lake Chad. The entire line will be 2,210 miles, of which 1,100 miles will be in the Sahara.

For hundreds of miles the line will need no embankment. Labor has been recruited from many sources, according to the very meager information available. Thousands of former Republican soldiers of Spain who had been interned in France are employed. Some of the laborers are Jews from Central Europe, transferred to the desert from French concentration camps. Others are volunteers of the Foreign Legion and perhaps also some inhabitants of Northern Africa. One of the former laborers, J. H. Westreich, gave a graphic account in a newspaper interview of conditions of the construction gang in the desert.

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They are afflicted with tropical diseases. They sleep in holes scooped out of earth and cover themselves with canvas. The men are alive with lice and fleas. They get two liters of water a day for washing and drinking. Water is carried to them in tanks from a distance of twelve kilometers. Their wages are two cents a day.

It is expected that the entire line will be completed in three years. A temporary line—*Decauville*, as the French call it—may be finished in six months. The locomotives will have Diesel motors, which need only 1 percent of the water a steam locomotive consumes. The train will have all the water it needs at the time of departure. Vegetable fuel oils will be consumed instead of the more expensive gasolines. The line has already been dubbed *la ligne d'arachides*, the peanut line, because it will use oil extracted from peanuts.

As to the question of security, it is expected that the line will increase it to such an extent that it will no longer be a problem. The authorities will also depend upon the co-operation of the peace-loving tribesmen, who are infinitely more numerous than the troublesome ones. But these peaceful natives, known as the *ksuriens*, have been browbeaten by the rambunctious ones. Being organized and

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knowing the Government's full power behind them, they are expected to gain the upper hand.

Why did the French Government decide in favor of such a vast project at the very time when the country was virtually on the verge of starvation? The answer to this question depends upon its source.

### SEVERAL QUESTION MARKS

The French press took the line that this was a move to bolster the prestige of France. Now that the country was checkmated in Europe, its creative energy had to be turned to use in Africa. France, they said, always knew how to gain strength from defeat on the battlefield. This was the time to organize overseas France in such a way that the 38,000,000 inhabitants of the French African mainland could be united in reality and not merely on the map. It is only after the completion of the line that France will have a continuous empire all the way from the North Sea to the Gulf of Guinea, from Dunkerque to Brazzaville, corresponding to a territory stretching all the way from Southern Labrador to the "bulge" of Brazil.

The Trans-Sahara line, they say, is the beginning only of a much vaster project. It will be part of the Trans-



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African network, connecting Northern Africa with the southernmost part of French Equatorial Africa and the island of Madagascar.

Critics of the Trans-Saharan project in foreign countries were quick to call attention to certain suspicious facts. The French Government at Vichy, they said, was under the thumb of the Germans. It could take no important decision without first assuring itself of the approval of Berlin. This approval was evidently forthcoming. The German press—and all of it is government-controlled—wrote about the project in a friendly spirit. Had it been against German interests, it would have taken another line.

On September 5, 1941, it was announced that the French Government at Vichy had appropriated an additional 128,000,000 francs for work on the French West African naval base at Dakar and its overland communication with the Mediterranean. This appropriation, too, appeared in a most suspicious light. It revealed great haste in connecting the railway line across the Sahara with Dakar. Business conditions did not justify such haste. Strategic considerations were the only ones that could explain it.

France may have been apprehensive about an attack on Dakar by the Allies, by the United States, by both, or by a combination of American Powers under the leadership of

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the United States. These countries were not interested in Dakar for purposes of trade. They were interested in her for strategical reasons. They did not want the Nazis to project themselves right into the center of the South Atlantic by taking over, openly or in camouflaged form, this most vital of all West African bases.

Would it be in the interest of France to frustrate the attempt of Great Britain and the United States to get into Dakar ahead of the Germans? France was beaten in a war by the Nazis. It is human nature not to like the fellow who beats you—at least not so soon after the beating. The Germans took over the larger and richer part of France, including Paris, and kept it under their occupation. No major country in recent centuries has ever had to swallow as much pride as did France. She was treated as a European Power would treat some native Kingdom in Africa. Could a nation love its tormentors as much as the French Government professed to love the Nazis?

Of course, the French were under the screws of the Nazi executioners and they had to do pretty much what they were told. Perhaps they would have liked to sabotage their enemy of yesterday. That enemy would see to it that such sabotage should not occur. No defeated country could be expected to do more than assume a passive attitude in a war

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continuing between former friends and antagonists. The Germans were not content with that. They pressed for active support from the French, and they got it. The Trans-Saharan Railway is the proof. The speed with which it is being built is the further confirmation of this evidence.

While the Second World War is raging, this railway line is needed by the Germans. It gives them all they want in order to get speedily to the place they want most. It enables them to get to Dakar overland. It gives them the chance to arm Dakar the quick and safe way. It is an answer to the aggressor's prayer. It gives a country enjoying unquestioned land supremacy the opportunity to gain also sea supremacy without having to spend a cent on the expansion of its navy. From Dakar even an inferior navy can operate in South Atlantic waters. From there the air arm can work havoc with ships moving toward all parts of the earth. From there America can be kept in check. All this Dakar can do for Germany with the trans-desert route. France really did not need it. She was an important sea power, the ally of the most important naval power in the Old World. The Trans-Saharan would have been merely a luxury for her. But for the Germans it is a necessity. That is why the Trans-Saharan is such an important factor in the world today.



## *VI. Colonial Adventure*

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### THE FRENCH AND COLONIAL EXPANSION

DAKAR'S IMPORTANCE LIES, as we have seen, in her geographic relation to South America, also in her strategic, economic and political relation to French West Africa and the "bulge" of the Black Continent. It suggests the broader problem of French colonial empire in general. There is a close connection between Dakar and that empire. Dakar may be one of its props. If she goes, the entire French African colonial empire may go with her. Should the African possessions go, France's entire overseas empire may disintegrate.

The process of cracking up may begin on another continent. In the Summer of 1941, the Governors of French

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Indo-China and the Japanese Government agreed on what was called a policy of co-operation..Since then that colony is French only in name. From there the disruption of the French empire may begin, and once it gets started, there is no telling where it may end. Dakar may be stronger than Gibraltar, and yet she can be lost.

No intelligent appraisal of Dakar's importance and no prognostication as to her future are possible without at least some knowledge of the French colonial empire as it existed in 1940. Was there some sense to it, or was it merely an accident of history? Was it an organic product or was it a haphazard creation?

France was then the second-largest colonial Power in the world, led only by Great Britain. She controlled a total land area of 4,688,000 square miles in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Oceania. This territory was about twenty times the size of European France. It was inhabited by some 70,000,000 people—which was 28,000,000 more than the entire population of pre-war France.

Why did the French start on the road of colonial expansion? The Frenchman, as we know him, does not like colonial adventure, and he does not travel abroad frequently. He is the very image of the *petit bourgeois* who likes to work, with moderation, saves part of his money for

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his old age which he plans to spend in a little house in the *Midi*.

The Frenchman prefers to stay at home, convinced that no country can equal the fascination and charm of *la belle France*. In his own country he could find in normal times all the variety nature provides in its most enchanting moods. There he found sea coasts, stern and smiling, the tallest mountains in Europe, the most awesome glaciers, even small steppes and deserts.

A colony to the average Frenchman was *quelque chose de très loin là-bas en plein soleil*—something very far, down there, in the hot sun. He never relished the idea of seeing his hard-earned money devoured in exotic places in which he lacked interest. The peasant of France had additional cause to be suspicious. He feared that the colonies might undersell him because of their cheap labor. His suspicion of colonies was great for quite another reason. It was a standing joke with him that the English had created their colonial empire to provide soft jobs for "younger sons." The Frenchman was afraid that his own colonies might fulfill a similar purpose. He did not want to create a colonial aristocracy.

There was still another reason why a French colonial empire appeared to be an anomaly. France came closest

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to the ideal of a self-sufficient country. Her agriculture and industry were ideally balanced. While, naturally, she did not have all, she did have a good many of the raw materials modern countries need, and she could buy the rest on money she made on luxuries and tourists.

The condition of France in this respect was basically different from that of England. The narrow little island could grow on her own soil no more than 20 percent of the food she needed. Without an overseas empire, Great Britain would have been even in a worse position than Japan, which had the immeasurable advantage of being able to pilfer all the new ideas of industrial construction from her more advanced competitors.

## TWO GREAT EXPERIMENTS

In the history of France there have been two colonial empires. The construction of the first began in the thirteenth century. Its end came with the Napoleonic Empire. The second colonial empire was begun after Napoleon, and in a few decades it far surpassed the first. The very fact of repetition should put us on guard against the belief that

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France has collected her colonies in a moment of absent-mindedness.

It was during the Crusades that feudal lords of French origin set up States of their own in and near the Holy Land. Europeans are still called "Franks" in the Levant. Religion and expansion went hand in hand in those days. Saint Louis sent missionaries to Mongolia in the thirteenth century. In the following century Dakar and the surrounding country were occupied by sailors from Dieppe and Rouen.

After the discovery of America, the French followed the example of other peoples in taking a deep interest in finding short-cuts to the Spice Islands and the Indies. They were looking for the Southwest and, later, for the Northwest Passage. The Huron-Iroquois Indians of the Gaspé told the Frenchman, Jacques Cartier, that he was now in the Kingdom of Canada. This was their little joke, since *canada* meant "village" in their language.

It was another Frenchman, Nicholas de Villegagnon, who seized Brazil's beautiful Rio de Janeiro in the name of his sovereign, the Most Christian Majesty of France. He was to settle French Protestants, the Huguenots, in that distant country.

The age of French colonial expansion now began in earnest. North America was on the point of becoming a



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French dependency. Florida was known to the French as *Côte aux Bretons*. Samuel de Champlain settled in Quebec, building up New France. Cardinal Richelieu founded French Indian and African companies in order to save souls and make profits for his country. France expanded in all directions, as French fame reached its apogee under Louis XIV. It was his name that "Louisiana" was to perpetuate in the wilderness of America. Guiana, on the tropical shoulder of South America, was already a French colony. France's overseas empire extended farther than England's, and was exceeded only by Spain's.

Sailor-adventurers were the colonial heroes of this epoch. Most of them came from the sea coasts of France, from Normandy, with her seafaring Viking traditions, and from Brittany, with her intrepid fishermen explorers. No sooner was the zenith reached, when the star of France began to decline. French India was lost to the English, who were better organized and less scrupulous. Canada was also to go. The French had never thought much of her anyway. On a world-wide front the British took the offensive, and the French were unable to resist. The Revolution accelerated the process of dissolution. Napoleon followed the mirage of India and thought little of Louisiana. After

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the Battle of Trafalgar, French colonial greatness was little more than a memory.

Why had the first French colonial empire grown so great? France was just then taking the lead in the Western world, becoming *la grande nation*, and for her it was a matter of prestige to lead all others. National honor was considered of greater importance than mere profits.

Gold was also important, of course. In this restless age of discovery, no self-respecting nation could afford to let its neighbor do all the robbing. The Kingdom of France was at the head of the pack. Nor could France afford to let the upstart English do all the grabbing. Her own geographic location predestined her to take the lead. She was rich enough to make additional investments. Hers were the best parts of the Atlantic coast in Europe and the rich Mediterranean shore. She forged ahead of the Spaniards, when attention shifted to North America. In those Northern seas the Norman and Breton fishermen of France were at home. Jacques Cartier, Champlain and Le Sieur de la Salle came from those regions. For people of their type a trip to Canada was scarcely more than routine.

This overseas empire was lost mainly for internal reasons. Old France failed to keep abreast of the times; royal despotism thwarted initiative. On the other hand, the

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English moved ahead rapidly, their elastic institutions being more in harmony with the new age.

France began the nineteenth century with practically no colonies under her rule. The English returned to her the mere fragments of an overseas empire as a reward for having ousted Bonaparte. Back went a part of Guiana to the French; the British had no interest in acquiring more tropical forests. Back went also the small Caribbean islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique, the islets of St. Pierre and Miquelon at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River.

### IMPERIALIST AMBITIONS

Then a remarkable thing happened. The French set to work anew and built up a second colonial empire in no more than a half century. The first colony they acquired was Algeria, on the top of Africa. To many this seemed merely an extension of France into the northern part of the dark continent.

The conquest of Algeria began under the most irreconcilable and intransigent of rulers, that most Bourbon of all Bourbon Kings, Charles X, and was terminated under the rule of his successor, the most sensible and easy-going Bourbon, King Louis-Philippe.

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The reaction of the French public was worse than chilly. France had had an overdose of glory and now wanted peace. After Algeria only sporadic attempts were made to gain new land. The island of Tahiti was won in the Pacific Ocean.

Colonization began on a really vast scale again under the rule of Napoleon III and his successor, the Third French Republic. The second Bonaparte ruler sought laurels in Mexico, but found only cactus there. He was luckier in Oceania and Indo-China. Millions of square miles of territory were piled up by France after her defeat at the hands of the Prussians in 1870.

Republican France launched a campaign of conquest into the heart of Africa. She continued her conquest of Indo-China in the Far East. She turned her attention again to the southern shore of the Mediterranean, and acquired a protectorate over Tunis, to the east of Algeria. Then she brought the huge island of Madagascar under her rule, and established herself at the strategical southern entrance of the Red Sea, on the way to Suez.

In the "bulge" of West Africa overseas France was growing with breath-taking speed. From the tropical center she was forging eastward and northward. At the same time, she was pressing southward from the Mediterranean.

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Colonial-minded people had a vision of French Africa extending all the way from west to east, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, across the Sudan and the Nile.

This was also the aim of the French Major, Jean Baptiste Marchand, whose destiny it was to attempt to realize this vision. With a force of some 120 Senegalese soldiers he marched eastward, headed for the White Nile. Simultaneously, another small force of Frenchmen, reinforced by Ethiopian natives, moved westward, seeking junction with Marchand.

It was in the Summer of 1898 that Major Marchand reached the town of Fashoda on the White Nile, in the heart of the Egyptian Sudan. The place was little more than a cluster of native mud huts. But it was not a question of huts or the poverty of the settlement. The question was whether France should have colonies extending all the way from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, and Fashoda was to be an important link in this chain. Major Marchand hoisted the French flag.

British forces, also working on the creation of a chain of colonies, were operating toward the north and south. Their colonies were to extend from Cairo in Egypt all the way to the Cape of Good Hope in farthest South Africa. Hearing about Marchand's arrival, the English made for

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this point on the White Nile. At the mud town of Fashoda the two imperial wills clashed.

Meanwhile the French major was attacked by the viciously fanatical dervishes of Sudan. In vain did he wait for the arrival of armed reinforcements from the east. But the commander of the English forces, General Kitchener, did arrive. He helped Major Marchand shake off the dervishes. Then he hoisted the Egyptian and English flags not far from the French tricolor.

The "Fashoda Incident" created a great stir in the chancelleries of the major Powers. A clash between the two rival imperialisms appeared inevitable. But the English and French Governments were anxious to avoid the conflict. It became increasingly clear that there was ample space for both nations in Africa. Diplomatic negotiations were promptly initiated and, as a result, the French flag was hauled down. Major Marchand continued eastward as an explorer, and no longer as a conqueror.

France saw the advantage of having Great Britain on her side a few short years later. In Northwest Africa she wanted to extend her protecting hand to the Sultanate of Morocco, which maintained a precarious independence. Several countries coveted the Sultanate, and it was only a question of time when she would fall under alien rule.

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Spain claimed her with arguments that had a familiar ring in the ears of Frenchmen. These were the very issues France had advanced when seizing Algeria. The Spaniard invited all to look at the map and see for themselves that Morocco was merely an African extension of the Spanish Kingdom. But now another claimant appeared on the scene, demanding with a strong voice that it should be heard. It was the German Empire, young and aggressive, determined to make up for lost time. This was its chance to gain a large slice of Africa. The pickings were smaller, and the Germans were eager to get their share.

The French had no particularly valid cause to get Morocco, but they were much stronger than the Spaniards and, with British help, they were also stronger than the Germans. Diplomatic courtesy required that they should advance some reason for their desire to protect Morocco. The obvious pretext was their wish to defend their Algerian interests against the depredations of Moroccan tribesmen. This excuse was duly advanced. Diplomatic courtesy also required that they should not be reminded of the fact that the depredations could be stopped in other ways. The French view prevailed, and the Republic assumed a protectorate over Morocco, thereby rounding out her posses-

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sions on the entire southern coast of the Western Mediterranean. The First World War was brewing.

Since they were on the victorious side in that war, the French were able to round out some of their Central African possessions as well. They acquired the larger part of the formerly German-owned colonies of Cameroon and Togo as mandates. This was a new institution, under which the mandatory power held the colonies in trusteeship and not as outright possessions. It owed an account of its stewardship to the Mandate Commission of the League of Nations. The inhabitants of the mandates were to be trained in self-government and become free when ready to look after themselves.

## COLONIES AS AN INVESTMENT

What were the real causes of this remarkably swift growth of the second French colonial empire? The official causes were pretexts rather than real reasons, which followed well-established patterns. For example, it was a slight to the flag or to a representative of France, as in the case of Algeria, when the local ruler struck the French consul's face with a fly-swatter. He may have had personal



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provocation for doing so, since the two appear to have been accomplices in some shady financial transactions.

The pretext may have been the allegedly unfavorable or cruel treatment of the aggressor's nationals. This was the case in Tahiti, where missionaries did not receive friendly treatment, and in Indo-China, where the natives were accused of having massacred several French missionaries.

The financial pretext was the most popular one in the colonial imperialism of all major Powers. The intended victim was induced to accept a loan. If he showed signs of wanting to repay the money, he was forced to accept more until the point was reached where he had to default. Then the creditor country took over the financial management of the debtor, and later took over the entire country. This happened in the case of Tunisia.

Occasionally, the pretext and real reason were blended. This was the case when new territory was required for the protection of existing colonies. This happened in Morocco, in French West and in French Equatorial Africa.

What were the genuine causes of the second great overseas empire of France?

The statesman who had the strongest claim to be called the father of the Third Republic, Léon Gambetta, once exclaimed: "Don't you feel that people are getting suf-

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focused on this old continent?" He probably meant most of Europe outside of France. For nearly a century France had a population that refused to grow. She was in great need of protecting herself against the aggressive German Reich, the population of which was growing too fast. "There are twenty million too many Germans," Georges Clemenceau complained later. Paradoxically, one of the real reasons the French went into the colonies was because their country was underpopulated, while the Germans went into the colonies because their country was overpopulated.

Furthermore, French diplomacy was inclined to look upon the Mediterranean as the *mare nostrum* of France. This may have been a heritage of Roman times, perpetuated by the self-assertive Latinism of the French ruling classes. Besides, France wanted to be completely sure of her sea boundaries, so as to concentrate on the highly vulnerable land frontier along the Rhine. The Atlantic was an effective barrier, and no serious danger threatened her from that side. But the Mediterranean was an inland sea with all the advantages and disadvantages the name implied. Were it to fall into enemy hands, the sea coast would be of little avail to France.

The incursions of pirates and unruly tribesmen may have been real causes and not mere pretexts of colonial expan-

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sion. The coastal waters of North Africa were long infested with pirates all the way from the Moroccan Ceuta, across Gibraltar, to the Egyptian desert. These so-called Barbary pirates exacted high and humiliating tribute from seafarers, kidnapped crews and passengers, and held them for ransom. Algeria was a pirates' haunt.

Religion, too, may have been a cause as well as a pretext for the colonial wars of France. Some zealous French crusaders made it their life's purpose to save heathen souls at the point of the sword. The influence of missionaries on French Governments was great during various epochs. The Lazarists were especially anxious to go overseas. Charles X, in the post-Napoleonic period, depended largely upon the *ultramontane* party of extreme Catholics for his support. Many issues of the foreign policy of Napoleon III were determined by his desire to retain the support of the Church.

These two rulers may also be used for the illustration of another point. Both of them were most unpopular with the masses, Charles X from the very beginning of his reign, and Napoleon III later in his rule. In order to win the favor of the people they felt in duty bound to pursue policies of national prestige. Failures at home, they had to find compensation by means of brilliant successes in the foreign field. They were familiar with the Frenchman's

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eternal quest of *gloire*, and they knew that it was his way of seeking recognition *en masse*. He himself would grow by making France great, and no Frenchman could bear a grudge against the man who gave him greatness.

Tradition also had to be counted as a cause of colonial expansion. Once the flag of France had fluttered on all continents. Some of those countries retained the use of the French language and boasted of being heirs to the culture of France. Was it not the duty of France to lend a friendly hand to all races that sought her protection?

There was also a paradoxical cause for the rapid expansion of the colonial empire of the French Republic—paradoxical because that cause was a man, and not a Frenchman at that. He was a Prussian; his occupation was Chancellor of the German Reich; and his name was Prince Otto von Bismarck. France would have found the way of conquerors a more arduous one had it not been for the Iron Chancellor.

Bismarck's Germany defeated Napoleon III's France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. This was an unexpected disaster inflicted upon a great nation in no way accustomed to such humiliations. Bismarck was fully aware of the creative potentialities of the French. Now that he had his United Germany, he needed peace and quiet. He could

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have that only if France remained tranquil. In order to keep her within bounds, the Chancellor built up a heavily protected rampart of alliances. He was aware that such alliances best accomplished their purpose in war, which he wanted to avoid. A man of great intelligence and familiar with the French mind, he knew that France was thirsty for glory. He also knew that she must be kept from growing morbid after her defeat. He knew that the French must be given work to employ their surplus energy. He decided to help the French acquire glory and use their genius. He became a strong champion of French colonial expansion.

He helped the French build empires in Africa and in the Far East. Best known are his efforts to assist France in acquiring Tunisia in Northern Africa at the very time the Italians began to find a deep interest in that country. He even went so far as to warn the French to act promptly if they did not want to be anticipated by the Italians.

Bismarck felt he could afford to be magnanimous with the former enemy. Colonies did not interest him in those days. The best ones had been taken, he thought, and the price of the inferior ones was prohibitive. He believed that Germany had plenty of work on hand for years to come, making up for lost time, creating new industries and expanding her trade. Later on he was compelled to change

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this policy. Prestige required that the Great Powers should have colonies even if they were financial losses. Besides, the contagion of competition could not be resisted. The belief gained ground and became a dogma that colonies improved the nation's position in the struggle for raw materials and markets.

The industrial Revolution also helped France to become colonial-minded. Jules Ferry, a great empire-building French statesman, once declared: "Colonial policy is the offspring of industrial policy." The average Frenchman, who is a *rentier*, usually has two ways of saving his money. He stuffs it into a stocking and hides it, when times are bad. He turns it into bonds, preferably issued by the Government, when times are good. In happier days he may have been a radical in politics, but at all times he is a conservative in finances.

These conservative *rentiers* frequently want to have a fling. Money multiplies slowly in government obligations at home. It grows more rapidly when invested in more precarious ventures. Hundreds of millions of gold francs were sunk by the cautious French farmer in a wretched country like Tsarist Russia. He also invested vast amounts in colonial ventures; there he could be reckless and cautious at the same time. The bonds were issued by established

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colonial governments, and that gave him a certain sense of security. But these were drafts upon the future, about which nobody could really be sure. The colonies could turn out to be good or bad, and he could make big money or lose it all. The gambler in the *petit bourgeois* was enticed. Many of them were in favor of the colonies.

Once France started building up a colonial empire it became the subject of certain ineluctable laws. One such law was that no one could foresee where and when the expansion would come to a halt. Few examples could be better than that of Dakar itself. Originally, the French had only the small island of Gorée, across the peninsula on which Dakar is situated. That island, merely a few acres, stands alone in an inhospitable world, a constant temptation to greed. When the grabbing contest grew intense, the French decided to take Dakar for safety's sake. As all the world now knows, that was a stroke of fortune, since Dakar is today the base of two great ocean highways and the heart of a great empire in Africa. In those days Dakar was dangling in mid-air, attached to nothing. Farther to the north there was Saint-Louis, and it, too, had to be secured. The town is in the estuary of the River Senegal. That was both good and bad, a protection and a threat. The river was a protection in French hands, but a threat under foreign rule.

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Once the French embarked upon their policy of expansion, they simply could not stop, as, under similar circumstances, no other nation could have stopped.

France reached the headwaters of the Senegal, which could well have been the logical limit of their expansion. There is only a narrow gap between the headwaters of the mighty Senegal and of the still mightier Niger River. The natural thing for the French was to follow the great stream and secure it for themselves as additional protection. They did just that, and went as far as the English let them go.

The French were also threatened from the open country of the north. Again they were forced to move, even though the Sahara desert was no invitation. They had to move eastward. They reached the halfway mark of the great African bulge, arrived at Lake Chad, passed onward and entered the easternmost part of the continent. The English stopped them again, this time at Fashoda.

The French had to acquire a territory of millions of square miles just to secure a few acres of rock. Scholars call this "the principle of the growth of surfaces." It is the tendency of colonies to expand from a central key point, from protective barrier to protective barrier.

In his excellent book, *La Géographie Humaine*, Georges



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Hardy formulates another pertinent principle. A civilized organization, he states, facing unstable conditions, is either forced to disappear or to extend until it reaches another civilized organism. The fragmentary kingdoms in the heart of Africa were mere vacua, from this point of view. When French colonial expansion reached them, they had to be filled.

A word must also be said about the really remarkable gifts of the French as colonizers. There are several reasons why the French are at least the equals of the British in this field. They have a pride of culture, in normal times, but little pride of race. Anyone speaking their language—preferably without an accent—and accepting their civilization is readily admitted into their community. A black man could become a Frenchman after he had absorbed French ways. There was no racial problem in pre-Vichy France, and there was no color line.

The attitude of the French toward the natives was therefore entirely different from that of the English. Natives find the British fair. They help them in many ways, let them work out their own salvation, accept their institutions, and treat them as human beings. But the English live in watertight compartments, They manifest no contempt for the natives, but place them on a different planet.

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This system is not offensive, and it has worked. It is efficient, and honest, but it is icy cold.

The natives can warm up to the French, for whom they feel affinity and attraction. The sunny disposition of the Frenchman is ingratiating, and the native, too, likes to laugh.

The Frenchman is more artistic than efficient, and he is not a brilliant organizer. But he has the gift of extemporizing, and that is a precious asset in a wild country, where rules work best when they are broken. The Frenchman can be an exemplary leader of men. The best French colonizers have been very conscious of their obligations toward the natives. The worst of them are, of course, no better than the same type elsewhere.

The French empire-builder—be he only a mere cog in the huge machine—gives full play to his artistic sense, to the immense benefit of the huts and towns of the natives. Beautiful is the description for the new sections the French have built in many cities of Africa. They appeal not merely to the eye, but also contain the most modern comforts. The natives are not slow to realize the blessings of such a friendly regime. There have been uprisings—but not too many nor greatly inspired—against French rule because natives often prefer the curse of their own cul-

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tural inferiority to the blessings of alien superiority. The name of France will be inscribed in the golden book of colonial history.

Lastly, we must mention the role of remarkable French pioneers in colonization. "The world is the heroes' gift to the multitude," the Italian poet D'Annunzio once said. In the history of French colonies there is an exceptionally large number of such heroes.

The first French colonial empire under the *ancien régime* was a brilliant improvisation, the work, largely, of seafaring adventurers in pursuit of gold and fame. Many of them sailed to immortality on the crest of the upsurge of exploration which led to the discovery of all America. This movement enabled an over-regimented world to break its chains, get away from the prevailing tyranny and extend its horizon. The Southern Latin people were the first to plunge themselves into this adventurous life, which was in harmony with their temperament and the prevailing conditions. The restraining influence of the Church was strongest in Portugal and Spain. The greatest adventurer-navigators came from those countries. To be sure, they went into the New World for the greater glory of God, but America's Divine Providence did not for long have the Holy Inquisition at its disposal.

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It was only after the Southern Latin countries had exhausted themselves that France stepped in. Her pioneering work was performed in the north rather than in the south. As the French explorer-adventurers pushed onward, hundreds of thousands of square miles fell under their sway. By the time England had reached the decision to go forth into the world, the Latin explorers' first enthusiasm had died down. By then a large part of the globe was ready for the organizers, and these were the British.

The second French colonial empire was of an entirely different type. Again audacity was required, but it was not that of the mariner sailing into the unknown. It was the audacity of the soldier, opening up endless tracts of uncharted land. It was also the boldness of the organizer, penetrating to the very core of a problem, while eliminating inconsequential details. It was the boldness of the law-giver, attempting to bridge the gulf between peoples who live on the same earth but do not belong to the same world.

The heroes of the new colonial empire of France were generals and marshals. The mere roster of the names is highly revealing. It shows that scarcely any civilians made names for themselves in this work. This does not mean that they did not distinguish themselves at all. Jules Ferry,

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Premier of France shortly after the Franco-Prussian War, saw clearly the importance of a new colonial empire as a means of restoring the nation's self-confidence. Charles de Freycinet, a perennial head and member of French cabinets, also had colonial vision. But neither the one nor the other became as closely identified with overseas achievement in the popular mind as, for instance, General Faidherbe or Marshal Lyautey. Nobody can think of Senegal without promptly thinking of Faidherbe, the great colonial leader. Even less can one think of Morocco without immediately recalling the greatest name in French colonial history, Lyautey. It was in the French colonies that some of the greatest men in the military history of France gained their reputations.

The name of Marshal Joseph Jacques Césaire Joffre, simply "Papa Joffre," will always be associated with the victory on the Marne in the early weeks of the First World War. Long before that, Joffre distinguished himself in the French colonies as far apart as Indo-China, Madagascar and Africa. It was he who assured the route of France to the strategically located Timbuktu on the Niger River.

The name of General Galliéni is also inscribed on the honor roll of French colonial history. To the world at large he is best known as the defender of Paris in September,

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1914, when the Germans were within easy walking distance. It was then that the "taxi army" of the capital took much-needed reinforcements to Papa Joffre fighting on the Marne. Few names are better known in the Upper Senegal country than Galliéni's.

The very mention of Marshal Louis Hubert Gonzalve Lyautey recalls the most prosperous epoch of French colonial history. The other military leaders earned their greatest fame on the battlefields, but Marshal Lyautey was the colonial official *par excellence*. His was a rare combination of strength, vision, tact and understanding. He knew how to pacify the least co-operative chieftain with words, whenever possible, or with arms, after other means had failed. Brilliant in colonial warfare, he was even more brilliant in organization.

Like many other famous colonial leaders he first attracted attention in Indo-China. Then he showed his mettle in Madagascar with Galliéni. But it was neither in the Far East of Asia nor in the Far East of Africa that he was to win immortal fame. Lyautey and Morocco are synonymous words even in the popular mind. He served in Northern Africa first by restoring order, cleaning up the Atlas Mountains and building defensive barriers against the incursions of the tribesmen. He continued his task by giving the Pro-

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tectorate of Morocco as good a government as it was humanly possible to give. His idea was to co-operate rather than to command. The inhabitants found this difficult to understand at first, but when they finally comprehended it, France was amply rewarded with the Lyautey peace which reigned in Northern Africa for many years.

Summing up, the second colonial empire of France was a remarkably successful venture, even though it was haphazard rather than structural. Any "plan" it may have revealed was accidental. It could not have come into being if it had not been for the co-operation of Great Britain. As the greatest colonial empire, it was of vital interest to England to select her neighbors. She preferred Powers with restrained ambitions. Consistently, she strove to maintain a balance of power, since that would give her the last word in all disputes.

Originally as haphazard as the French colonial empire, the British Commonwealth of Nations assumed a certain pattern in the course of time. At a cursory glance it appeared merely a group of splotches and dots on the map. But these splotches and dots ultimately were integrated into a logical pattern. They became self-governing dominions, enjoying equal status with the mother country.

Colonies acquired status along vital trade routes. They

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became dependent on each other. Knocking out one would have endangered the security of all the others. The British Empire came to be considered a "system."

Just because of this delicate balance, it could not be in Britain's interest to have any kind of neighbors. Remaining territories could not be allowed to fall into unfriendly hands. The number of rivals was limited anyway. Spain and Portugal were no longer acquisitive colonial empires. They were happy to be able to retain what they had. Portugal could do so only with British assistance.

Italy was disunited, her energies absorbed in the process of unification even after it had been nominally accomplished. The organizing gifts of the Germans were consumed at home. They had to catch up with nations that had been organized for centuries. Japan was little more than a vast number of islands on the map. Russia appeared to be pressing eastward, and England had no desire to let her change the direction.

France had been Great Britain's traditional enemy, but now she appeared to be the least of several evils. She seemed to have shed her horns. It was natural for the English to turn to her. It was even more natural for Britain to become the active ally of the French after the Germans had first appeared on the world stage. The Reich was aggressive,



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dynamic, better organized, almost Oriental in her disregard of life.

The French and British overseas empires became complementary, not antagonistic. In Africa, especially, the British were spreading southward, while the French were expanding crosswise. It was the British that were given precedence where the two great empires met. If France were to fall—a gratuitous assumption—it was believed that Britain would inherit her colonies.

Today England occupies nearly all strategical positions in regard to the French colonies. It is not likely that overseas France could resist the pressure of overseas Britain, were it to be exerted with full force.

France's contribution to colonial administration has been so great that all the world would be the loser if she were to drop out as a major colonial Power. The racial tolerance of the Third French Republic was in direct contrast with the racial intolerance of the Third German Reich. Africa would in all truth be "black" if she were to witness the final triumph of German arms.

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## *VII. Spearhead into the Atlantic*

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### AMERICA TAKES A HAND

IN HIS STATEMENT to newspaper correspondents on May 16, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt traced the possible route of Nazi air attack from Dakar and the west coast of Africa to Brazil, thence to Venezuela, into Cuba and Mexico, and finally into the Mid-Western section of the United States. Again and again he has referred to the possibility of such an attack.

Addressing the soldiers of the Army, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson said over the radio on August 15, 1941:

"Germany has been pushing into North Africa, and we have reason to believe that a major advance will be made by her into the continent. At Dakar, which is held by Vichy forces, now friendly with Germany, the great western bulge

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of the African coast narrows the South Atlantic Ocean until the distance from Dakar to the easternmost point of Brazil can be easily traversed either by air or sea. The German-controlled press of Paris today is openly urging that Germany be invited by Vichy to come into Dakar."

On Aug. 18th, a few days after his meeting with Prime Minister Churchill, President Roosevelt announced that American planes would be flown by American pilots to the Allied Middle-East command via the "bulge" of Africa. The planes would follow the route to San Juan, Porto Rico; Trinidad; Para in Brazil and from there to Natal, the South American bulge, the nearest point to Dakar. From Natal the airplanes would cross the ocean to West Africa, making their first landing in the Old World at Bathurst, capital of the British colony and protectorate of Gambia, about a hundred miles south of Dakar. Gambia is surrounded by French West Africa on three sides.

From Bathurst the planes would traverse British and Free French territory, as well as coastal waters to Khartoum, in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, and from there, perhaps, to the Middle-East command in Cairo. Intermediate landing fields were mentioned: Lagos in Nigeria, and Koforidua, on the Gold Coast.

This "ocean-ferry service," as the newspapers promptly

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dubbed it, would be carried on by Pan-American Airways, it was announced. It would also operate the air-transport service, carrying spare parts on the eastbound trip and pilots on the flight back. The planes to be used would be government-owned, placed at the disposal of a private company for this particular purpose. The routes and conditions of the service would be under rules decided upon by the Government. A private company was selected, so as not to embarrass Brazil by regular landings of United States army and navy pilots.

The entire colony of Gambia, of which Bathurst is the capital, is only some seventy square miles, and the adjoining protectorate of Gambia is little more than a narrow strip of land along the lower reaches of the River Gambia. The entire country is hilly, and has rocky outcroppings, with few desirable landing fields. There are good landing places, however, all around Dakar.

If the United States and Britain were in possession of Dakar and French West Africa, our planes could use the safest and shortest route to the Middle East. Dakar would be one of the principal air and naval bases of the Anglo-American community of nations. Because of her key position along the great sea and air routes, she could keep prowlers at a safe distance and prevent them from inter-

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fering with this vital service. Dakar could then really become the Gibraltar of air-borne traffic between the East and West.

Dakar is important for the United States for geographic reasons. We do not need her for economic purposes; it is clear that the economic importance of all French West Africa for the United States is trifling. Even in good years, the trade between us and that vast colony amounted to no more than five million French paper francs. True enough, the potential wealth of French West Africa has not even been touched; capital and pioneering vision could turn it into a much richer country. But the United States does not need to stray so far afield.

Dakar is the spearhead of the Old World into the Atlantic Ocean. She is a bridge made by Nature for a modern conqueror with designs on the Western Hemisphere. She is vital to us as a bulwark of our own national defense, as well as the defense of the entire Western Hemisphere.

## HEMISPHERE DEFENSE AND THE MONROE DOCTRINE

Insofar as national defense is concerned, it has been our consistent policy to build up our outer defenses at a safe

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distance from our own coasts. Our nearest base in the open Pacific Ocean, the Hawaiian group, is more than two thousand miles from San Francisco. The Philippine Islands are farther east even than Japan, against which they were meant to be a defensive barrier. We sent our troops as far east as Iceland when trouble began to brew in the Atlantic.

Hemisphere defense has an even larger scope. It was assumed until recently that the United States fully committed herself to defend any part of the Western Hemisphere against outside aggression. More recently, however, various modifications of this commitment have been suggested. The United States should confine her interest only to that part of the Western Hemisphere which is essential for her own protection, we have been warned. How far should this protective zone extend? We have heard about half-hemisphere and quarter-hemisphere defense. We should limit our self-imposed obligations to the southern boundary of the South American "bulge." These qualifications have been offered by Senators, Representatives, and other people in the public eye. Newspapers have also given their interpretations of the "hemisphere," all of which has only served further to confuse the public. Map-makers for periodicals simply revelled in presenting unexpected "angles" of hemisphere defense.

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Whatever view is accepted, Dakar and her hinterland are closely linked up with the only doctrine which the United States has consistently upheld in her foreign relations: the Monroe Doctrine. The dangers which President James Monroe mentioned in his famous message in 1823 are even more real today. Then the great threat was from the members of the Holy Alliance of Russia, Prussia and Austria, which had covenanted themselves to preserve their own autocratic way of life. In execution of their bond they combined their efforts to crush all attempts of oppressed peoples to free themselves. They appeared ready to destroy the movements for independence in South America against the despotism of Spain.

"We owe it, therefore, to candor," President Monroe read, "and the amicable relations existing between the United States and those Powers, to declare that we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety. . . . It is impossible that the Allied Powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our Southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should

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behold such interposition, in any form, with indifference."

The Monroe Doctrine was a unilateral obligation undertaken by the Government of the United States to protect not merely its own territory, but also the territory of other independent nations of the entire Western Hemisphere. Latin America was not to be an Africa—an annex of Europe's imperialistic Powers. The United States assumed a diplomatic protectorate over the nations to the south of us.

As soon as the Latin American countries felt secure from European aggression and dared resent anything, they resented this diplomatic protectorate. They denounced the "colossus of the North," "dollar diplomacy" and "Yankee imperialism." In those days dollar diplomacy and Yankee imperialism really were in force. The Government of the United States was then the collecting agent of private capital. Latin American countries were induced and often bribed into accepting loans, the repayment of which was far beyond their means. As a way of insuring payment, they were taken over by the United States armed forces, thrown, so to speak, into the debtor's jail.

Only in the early thirties of this century did this policy undergo a change. Under the administration of President Herbert Hoover, acting through his able Secretary of State,



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Henry L. Stimson, the Government of the United States abandoned the policy of collecting debts by the marines. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dramatized this change by what he called the "good-neighbor policy." No longer were we the keepers of our younger brothers to the South. We were all equal and committed to the maintenance of our national integrities and to the protection of the hemisphere. If Costa Rica were threatened by aggression, for instance, we should be in duty bound to help her. If, on the other hand, the United States were thus threatened, it would devolve upon Costa Rica to try and save us.

The good-neighbor policy has created an immeasurably better atmosphere between the United States and the Latin American countries, even though there can be no question of equal co-operation as long as one of the partners is so much stronger. But the new policy makes the other countries feel that they are no longer our wards. The mere statement of a policy can sometimes be even more effective than deeds.

### DAKAR, AMERICA AND GERMANY

"Dakar is not on the Western Hemisphere," a typical isolationist view might hold, "and we have absolutely no business there."

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In this connection, the following facts must be borne in mind: Dakar is much closer to the Western Hemisphere than Iceland, which we have already occupied as a measure of self-defense, although it, too, belonged to another country. Dakar is closer to the nearest point of the Western Hemisphere than Honolulu, which is the nearest rampart we have to watch in the Pacific Ocean.

Then, too, the airplane has completely revolutionized both national defense and the common-sense interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. In President Monroe's day sailing vessels required weeks to cover the distance between the bulges of South America and Africa. To him the very idea of occupying Dakar for the better protection of the Western Hemisphere would have appeared preposterous. Today the distance between the bulges can be covered in five hours.

Today, too, the technique of invasion has been completely revolutionized. One country after another has fallen as much because of Fifth Columnists and spiritual invasion as the superior strength of German arms. It is only a short sea flight for German agents from Dakar to the nearest point in Brazil. Through this West African key point "traveling salesmen" and "commercial agents" of the Reich can conveniently flood South America.

Germany's interest in Western Africa as a jumping-off

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place for South America is not new and has not been revealed merely by the aggression of the Hitler régime. Togoland, a jungle country on the African "bulge," was one of the first colonies Imperial Germany acquired. Its value was obvious.

The United States did not want Germany to obtain a foothold in a part of Western Africa farther removed from our hemisphere than Dakar. At the beginning of this century, the Kaiser's Government made a bid for the Sultanate of Morocco, in Northwestern Africa. It ran into the opposition of France, which claimed prior rights. She considered the Western Mediterranean within the orbit of her own influence, and Morocco was much closer to her than to the Reich. Great Britain upheld the French Republic. France was a declining Power, and therefore no rival of England. Certain natural defenses in Morocco possessed as great strategical importance as Gibraltar itself, on the opposite side of the Straits. Great Britain found it more profitable to "spread the risks" in such situations.

The United States, too, threw her support to the French. Our Government did not want Germany established at the strategical point where the Atlantic meets the Mediterranean. Important points of Morocco on the Atlantic side

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are closer to important South American coastal cities than are New York or Philadelphia. Were the Germans to acquire special rights there, they might have gained immense trade advantages.

A conference met on January 16, 1906, in the Spanish town of Algeciras, in the shadow of the rock of Gibraltar. President Theodore Roosevelt sent a strong delegation. The Powers represented there decided, essentially, in favor of the French claims. Five years later France actually assumed the protector's rights over the larger part of Morocco.

The United States had another conflict, but that time a more serious one, before our entrance into the First World War. Now the German Imperial Government wanted to fight the United States from Latin America. The German Secretary of State, Arthur Zimmermann, dispatched a secret note to the Mexican Government on January 19, 1917, inviting it to enter into an alliance with the Reich. As a price, our neighbors to the south were to get New Mexico, Texas and Arizona. The note was sent through the German Minister at Mexico City, Herr von Eckhardt, but it was intercepted. On March 1, 1917, President Wilson published it. A few weeks later the United States declared war on the German Reich.

## THE NAZIS EYE SOUTH AMERICA

Never before has Germany manifested so deep an interest in America's foreign policy as she has under Hitler's rule. All the means of propaganda have been concentrated on the Latin American countries to crystallize opinion in favor of the Third Reich. The German Ministry of Propaganda and other specialized Nazi organizations have exploited the radio, news services—provided free or at reduced rates—the printing press in all its forms, lecturers, movies, "traveling salesmen"—all to influence the Latin American countries.

Special departments of the German Foreign Office, of the Nazi Party and of the so-called A.O.—*Auslandsorganisation*, foreign service—have been set up and operated with real German thoroughness. Cells of the N.S.D.A.P.—the German National Socialist Labor Party—went to work openly or secretly among Germans living in Latin America and among Latin Americans of German parentage. One of the top men among the Nazis, Walther Darré, the peasant leader, is an Argentinian himself. The Nazis consider all descendants of their countrymen in Latin America Germans, irrespective of their nationalities; the length of their stay or of their ancestors' in those countries does not count.

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The German secret police—*Geheime Staats-Polizei*—better known as the *Gestapo*, has been harder at work in these Latin American countries than anywhere else abroad. Money has been appropriated freely to suborn officials, politicians, editors, key journalists and other framers of public opinion. Funds have been available to foment insurrections and revolutions, create Fascist movements, cause splits among nations, races, creeds and political parties, and, above all, to "fight Bolshevism," which in the Nazi vocabulary means only "fighting for Nazism."

The testimony of the many special correspondents of American newspapers reporting on Nazi activities in Latin America has been remarkably uniform. Everywhere they encountered incontrovertible evidence of intense Nazi activity. Even casual tourists cannot fail to notice it, so open and flagrant are the machinations of the Nazi agents.

Even more eloquent is the testimony of the German press itself. For years the newspapers of the Reich have been devoting a surprisingly generous portion of space to the Latin American countries. Some of the articles published are the scholarly works of serious students, while others are popularizations. The latter are even more revealing than the former, since they clearly show the policy of the Reich Propaganda Ministry.

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They describe Latin America as an Eldorado, where tremendous wealth is hidden in the soil and rocks, awaiting the creative genius of man. This man, of course, is the German, even though the authors of the articles do not say so specifically. In the Reich press Latin America is described as the great prize the Hitler régime dangles in front of its victims. "We cannot say as yet that all this wealth will be yours," these authors imply. "Just keep on fighting! You will be amply rewarded for all the work you perform and the suffering you endure!"

Millions of gullible Germans swallow this propaganda. They know too well that after this war is over Europe will be a mass of *débris*, no matter who wins. They are made to believe indirectly that the fight is on for the treasured New World. When this war is over, America will be the only continent worth having.

This is why Dakar is of such vital importance to the United States. Clearly, it would be erroneous to believe that the problem of Dakar could be solved merely by taking over the port. That city amounts to little without her hinterland. The railway lines converging upon Dakar stress this dependence, which is mutual. Military experts would probably agree with General Faidherbe that an unattached Dakar would be virtually useless because it would be con-

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stantly menaced from the rear. Tropical Africa was occupied by the French to strengthen their fortified island of Gorée and, opposite it, the vitally important peninsula on which Dakar is situated.

### AMERICA'S INTEREST IN LIBERIA

What would happen if the Anglo-American Allies beat the Germans to Dakar only, leaving the hinterland to their tender mercies? Just a few miles away is Rufisque, the peanut-export harbor of Senegal. The seaport of the Senegal River, Saint-Louis, is only 150 miles to the north. The Germans could do many things with these harbors if the Allies were to confine their attention merely to Dakar. Even if the Allies were to seize all the vital points of Senegal, the Germans would still have a wide choice.

Wedged into French West Africa, about 200 miles from Dakar, is Portuguese Guinea, the capital of which, Bolama, has an excellent airport used by the American clipper planes as the Winter jumping-off place on their westbound trips across the Atlantic. The city has also a good harbor, although it cannot be compared to Dakar. Bolama is only a few miles farther from the Brazilian bulge than Dakar.



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The United States has long been interested in a part of this African bulge. That part is one of the so-called enclaves, hemming the sea coast—countries that do not belong to the French. This particular country is the Republic of Liberia.

Liberia was created largely through the efforts of the United States, and her basic law is patterned on the American Constitution. She was to be the haven of Negro slaves freed by their masters and, later, of colored people in general who wanted to return to their African "homeland." The Republic is bound to the United States by many links. Its custom receipts are in the hands of a General Receiver and Financial Adviser, designated by the United States. When France began pushing Liberia toward the sea coast years ago, the Government in Washington protested. United States naval squadrons were maintained in these waters not many years ago. Considerable amounts of American capital have been invested in Liberia. At the height of the rubber crisis, in the middle twenties of our century, when the producers in the South China Sea area sought to set up a monopoly, the Firestone Plantations Company received a ninety-nine years' lease from the Liberian Government on a million acres for the cultivation of Para rubber, the best of the commercial yields.

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"Although a formal protectorate over Liberia is contrary to our traditional policy," President Grover Cleveland said in 1886, "the moral right and duty of the United States to assist in all proper ways in the maintenance of its integrity is obvious."

"The story of Liberia from its earliest inception," Secretary of State Philander Chase Knox wrote to President Taft on March 22, 1910, "to its elevation to independent statehood demonstrates its American character throughout."

"Liberia is in effect the only colony which the United States ever established," an author writes in the July, 1910, issue of the *American Journal of International Law*. "The United States intervened so frequently between the natives and colonists, patching up difficulties and settling disputes," the same author states, "that it was commonly understood that the settlements were under the protection of the United States."

The Venezuelan delegate to the Council of the League of Nations, Señor Carlos Zúñiga, noted some years ago "the establishment of an African Monroe Doctrine." Shortly after his election in 1931, Liberia's President, Edwin J. Barclay, declared: "Mr. Hoover has helped the Firestone Company take Liberia." In January of the same year

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the *New York Post* wrote: "The United States exercises a virtual protectorate over the little Republic."

These interests may be used by the United States in shaping her future policy in Western Africa. There can be no doubt about the future of Liberia and of the entire African bulge if the Germans lay their hands on Dakar, as they are reported having already done.

On August 27, 1941, George Weller, a correspondent of the *New York Post* in Brazzaville, French Equatorial Africa, relayed the following interview with General Charles de Gaulle, head of the Free French forces:

" 'I am not keeping facts secret any longer. I have offered the United States the use of the principal ports in Free French Africa as naval bases against Hitler.

" 'I have offered them upon the basis of long-term lease analogous to the plan under which Britain offered her Atlantic bases to the U. S. But I have not asked for any destroyers in return. I have asked only that the U. S. make use of these bases to counteract Dakar and make it more difficult for Hitler to thrust deeper into Africa as he undoubtedly will do as soon as he is able to release some forces from Russia.'

"With these words, uttered in quiet, controlled tones, tall, angular leader of the Free French in a frank talk re-

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vealed that he had invited the U. S. to meet the Nazi threat against West Africa and South America before Hitler gains a foothold.

" 'Dakar was the strongest base in West Africa before the armistice, and it is even stronger now,' de Gaulle asserted.

" 'The danger to the U. S., should Dakar fall into Nazi hands, is not somewhere in the future but imminent, immediate. It is only the lack of material that keeps Hitler from using French West Africa, and that situation results only from his being temporarily unable to spare aircraft from the eastern front.' "

### PROBLEMS OF DEFENSE AND OFFENSE

Is Dakar difficult to take, easy to defend? Our armed forces know the answer. But it should be of interest to learn how such an authoritative German periodical as *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, reputed to have provided several blueprints of Nazi action, answers this question. In the September, 1940, issue of the magazine, a recognized authority on the subject, Hermann Rœckel, gave the answer under the title: "Dakar, the Center of France's Strategical Position in the Middle Atlantic."

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"There are only a few points on the continent of Africa," Herr Roeckel writes, "that are important in relation to the seaways. These are Ceuta-Gibraltar, at the gate of the Western Mediterranean, the Cape, at the meeting place of two Oceans, and Port-Said—Suez—since the completion of the Canal. For the last three decades a new one has been added to them: Dakar. She proved her worth already in the First World War, where she was the point of embarkation of hundreds of thousands of colored soldiers, sent to fight on all battlefields, and of millions of tons of vital raw materials.

"The central location of Dakar is unmatched. It is at this point that the African coast swings southeastward. Measured by the tonnage of goods shipped, Dakar occupies the third place, after Marseille and Le Havre. Unlike other ports in this region, Dakar is of continental, and not of local, importance. Projecting into the ocean, she comes nearest to other continents. She reaches out toward the south coast of the United States, the petroleum harbors of Mexico and the oil-refineries of Curaçao. Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires are within her radius of action on the opposite coast of the South Atlantic. In such a way contact has been established between the South American producers of raw materials and the French war consumers." [Although this

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article was published after the downfall of France, it was evidently put into print before it. E.L.] "Dakar collects and stores the vital materials she ships to the harbors of Western France. It is in Dakar that the convoys are assembled. She collects also the native products of French West and Equatorial Africa: oils, fats, tropical growths."

Now Herr Roeckel turns to the problem of an invasion of Dakar.

"French marine headquarters have staged a regular invasion of town and harbor in order to probe their weak points and to test the strength of defense. They have found that the only possible threat was a landing of enemy forces on the Cape Vert peninsula. A large-scale landing operation in 1938 was to prove the feasibility of defense, uniting as it did the maneuvers of land, sea and air forces. It was reported that the rocky coast in some places and the flat and swampy shores in others rendered the operation extremely difficult.

"The defense strength of Dakar is also conditioned by auxiliary positions in the rear and on the flanks. It was important to ascertain therefore from what side Dakar's defenses should be strengthened. It was found that the coast north of Cape Vert is totally unfitted for the landing of larger units. This is not merely because harbors are lacking

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on a shoreline of more than two thousand kilometers, but because rocks, cliffs, sand and dune provide a natural defense. This applies also to the city of Saint-Louis with its high sand-bar in the estuary of the Senegal River, and to the harbors farther north, in Mauretania (above all Port Etienne) and Villa Cisneros in Spanish-owned Rio de Oro. The hinterland of the coasts, steppes and waterless deserts also presents immense difficulties.

"The dry zone reaches the ocean in many places of Mauretania and Rio de Oro. Port Etienne must, therefore, be supplied with water brought all the way from Bordeaux. The fishing ports of the Spanish Rio de Oro are provisioned with water from the Canaries. There is not one place on the entire coast that could play an important strategical role.

"The coast south of Dakar presents equally great difficulties to landing operations. While there are some good anchorages in the estuaries of some of the rivers, they are cut off the sea by lagoons, sand-bars and marshy jungles. The sand-bars are the most serious obstacles, because they keep larger boats away from the ports. In order to secure their southern flank from attack, the French built defenses at the town of Kaolak on the Salum River and at the town of Zignichor on the Casamance River. It is behind Cape Vert that the other type of coasts begins: the lagoons.

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"Konakri in French Guinea occupies a special position, as she has been fitted into a system of defense by assigning the role to her of watching the near-by Bissago Islands of Portuguese Guinea and Liberia. The ring of military establishments reaches all the way down to Abidjan on the Ivory Coast. The terminal point is 'German' Douala [which belonged to Germany before the First World War] in the Cameroons.

"The importance of air defenses has been fully demonstrated in this war. Their strength depends largely on the ground organization, which is not satisfactory in West Africa. The air-strategical task of a system of bases has not been fulfilled by the construction of transport lines. These lines must link up, mutually protecting one another. It is most difficult to accomplish this on a desolate coastline of thousands of kilometers. It has been made even more difficult by the presence of non-French colonies between the individual coast-stations. In the north it was the Spanish Rio de Oro that made it necessary to leave a straight course, while in the south it was the Portuguese and Spanish enclaves as well as the Negro Republic of Liberia.

"Civilian aviation connects France with her tropical colonies along the West African route. The starting points are Marseille and Bordeaux; the distance to Dakar covers



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four thousand kilometers. After crossing Spanish and Portuguese colonies, the two lines unite over North African territory. From Tangier the planes fly over Rabat, Casablanca, Agadir, Villa Cisneros, Port Etienne, Saint-Louis, and so down to the airport of Dakar. From there the planes depart for the hop to South America. The hydroplane station at Hann further extends the Dakar air base. The inland terminus of the line is at Kotonu in Nigeria, which is also the landing-place of the Trans-African Line of Algiers-Fort Lamy-Brazzaville-Elizabethville-Madagascar.

"The rich Senegal and Niger valleys have been opened up by railways converging on Dakar. But the last link is missing: the line to the Mediterranean across the desert. Its place is taken by buses which maintain connection between the north and south."

Herr Roeckel has given us not merely a description of the military and aviation factors of importance, but also a blueprint for the future. When Germany took over France, which she did, even though we still speak of "unoccupied territory," she acquired Dakar. Perhaps a test will be made of Herr Roeckel's views on the strategic position of Dakar and of the country all around it. We have had ample warning that this test may well be made by the United States.



## *VIII. Island Bulwarks*

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### THE ATLANTIC ISLANDS

THE FOUR clusters of islands scattered in the Atlantic Ocean along the great seaways of Southern Europe and Western Africa are the Azores, the Madeiras, the Canaries and the Cape Verde Islands. Three of these so-called Atlantic Islands belong to Portugal; the Canaries are owned by Spain. The Azores lie along the highly traveled route between Southern Europe and North America. They, as well as the three other groups, the Madeiras, the Canaries and the Cape Verde Islands, occupy strategical positions in regard to North and South America. They are sentinels in the defense of the entire Caribbean region. The Canary Islands and the Cape Verde groups are outposts of Dakar toward

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the north and west. The Cape Verde Islands, particularly, are natural bastions for the peninsula of Cape Vert and its huge hinterland, French West Africa.

All these islands, with the exception of the Cape Verdes, have long been popular as tourist centers. They were the "Islands of the Blessed" in ancient times. Today they are being feverishly converted into armed fortresses. The first bombers to swoop down upon them may make them the "Islands of the Accursed." The whole world is concerned with their strategic importance for the Americas, in one direction, and for Dakar, in the other.

"Hawks' Islands"—*Ilhas dos Acores*—were so named because Gonzalo Velho Cabral, one of their earliest discoverers, mistook the numerous buzzards he saw for hawks. The islands stretch in an east-west direction for nearly 380 miles. They form three distinct groups. The most important of these, São Miguel, lies to the east. The island of Fayal, with the strategically placed city of Horta on it, is near the center. The distance between Fayal and Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, is 912 miles. The distance to Bermuda is 1,806 miles, and to Newfoundland only 1,180 miles—barely three hours in a fast bomber.

The island of São Miguel is on the regular route of great transatlantic liners plying between New York and Southern

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European ports. Pan-American Airways clippers use Horta as a landing station between the two continents. Thirteen cable companies have their lines on this island, including British and German, American and Portuguese. Here the most up-to-date cable station in the world links it to key points in Europe, America and the Cape Verde Islands. Weather reports from ships and stations on both sides of the Atlantic are received by Portuguese experts on Horta. The island also serves as an important fueling station for all shipping.

The Azores are considered an integral part of Portugal, and not colonial possessions. Along with the Madeiras, they are described in official documents as "The Adjacent Islands." Their largest town is Ponta Delgada, on the southern shore of São Miguel. It is fortified, and has a population of some 18,000.

The population of the entire island group numbers about 260,000. The Portuguese are predominant, with some admixture of Moorish and Berber blood. In the course of centuries navigators and adventurers of many other strains have settled on these alluring islands, and they have left traces of their Breton, Norman, Irish and Flemish origin.

Among all the Atlantic Islands, this group is most richly endowed by nature. The islands are as self-sufficient as it is

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physically possible for so small a territory to be. The inhabitants produce their own grain and fruit, meat and milk. They obtain their sugar from native beet, their wine from local grapes. They grow their tobacco in their own backyards, drink their own tea, eat the fish they catch themselves. The men of the small island of Pico are famous as whalers, and the oil they get is for home consumption. The islanders sleep in beds of native wood, wear garments of home-grown flax and the wool of the sheep they raise.

On the whole, the climate is delightful, but rain falls often and storms are frequent. In bad weather, navigation is a problem; the coasts are dangerous.

The Azores can boast of an excellent geographic location, adequate natural resources and sufficient equipment—the three essentials of important bases. But military experts tell us that, while the island group is ideal for raiding operations and as a submarine base, it lacks a sufficient number of really good harbors.

In normal times, the defense of these islands was more symbolic than real. They had a protective force of merely two regiments of infantry and two battalions of garrison artillery. The total tonnage of the Portuguese navy, with its far-flung commitments, was no more than twenty thousand. It had only a few destroyers—quite up-to-date—

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and several submarines, built in domestic and British yards.

Several contingents of soldiers have been sent to the Azores in recent times. Portugal has probably acquired some warships. Even so, the islands would be helpless against a first-class naval power.

### GERMANY'S PLANS FOR THE AZORES

The Azores have long played a role in the history of the United States. It was in the waters of these islands that the American privateer General Armstrong attacked in 1814 the British squadron provisioning in Horta harbor and carrying artillery for the army of Major General Sir Edward Pakenham. The sailing of the squadron was delayed. Meanwhile Andrew Jackson hurried southward with his militia from Kentucky and Tennessee, and arrived in time at New Orleans, which he defended with success.

The strategic importance of the islands became apparent during the First World War, when the United States established a supply base at Ponta Delgada. It was under the command of Rear-Admiral Herbert G. Dunn, who sailed from Philadelphia aboard the *Hancock* in January, 1918. Several destroyers, repair ships, a division of submarines

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and aviation equipment were at his disposal. Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Assistant Secretary of the Navy, was sent to inspect this base.

Shortly after the Americans' arrival, an enemy submarine sank a Portuguese barkentine. The submarine escaped. Emboldened by this first success, the German U-155—famed for its exploit of breaking the blockade around Baltimore—eluded the defenses of Ponta Delgada and began shelling the port. The American fuel ship, *Orion*, challenged the German boat, and forced it to retreat.

The people of Azores have maintained close relations with the United States for many years. Few families on the islands have no kinsmen in North America. Most of the Portuguese fishermen on Cape Cod emigrated from the Azores. The popularity of the name "Cabral" at Provincetown, for instance, perpetuating the memory of the great explorer, is evidence of a sentimental attachment to the island of their origin. In the cotton mills of New England, especially at Fall River and New Bedford, tens of thousands of ex-Azorians work as factory hands. "Batfore"—as Bedford is pronounced—is a household word on the Atlantic Islands. A French line maintained a regular service between New England and the Azores some years ago for the benefit of island travelers between the two continents. Many fruit

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farms and ranches are in the hands of Azorians in Southern California.

The Azores have been important pawns on the diplomatic chessboard for many years. Judging by the preparations of the Portuguese Government, its present diplomacy may easily lead to belligerency and even to complete destruction as a nation. For several other countries, too, this island group may well be the scene of a life and death struggle. There the crucial Battle of the Atlantic may be decided.

The Germans have long been aware of what the Azores mean to them. A startling report on their aspirations was revealed toward the end of the First World War in a pamphlet entitled *Erwerb der Azoren Notwendig zur Sicherung des Dauerfriedens auf dem Atlantischen Ozean* (Acquisition of the Azores Necessary to Assure Permanent Peace in the Atlantic Ocean) by Victor Hensen.

Only Germany can maintain permanent peace in the Atlantic, according to Herr Hensen. In German hands, the Azores could dominate the entire ocean region, and thus force Great Britain into a position of secondary importance. No longer could Britain subject the Reich to blockade. No longer could Britannia rule the Atlantic waves. "The eternal



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enemy of peace," the German author concludes, "would be annihilated."

For the British it is a matter of life and death that the Azores should not fall into unfriendly hands. "Occupation of the Azores," writes Walter Lippmann in his column in the *New York Herald Tribune*, "would close all the approaches to Britain except only the narrow northerly route, and even this would be dangerously jeopardized." England receives about 38 percent of her war-time oil from Venezuela and the Netherland West Indies; the shortest route between her and those territories passes the Azores.

Great Britain and Portugal have been friends for centuries. Portugal is known as "England's oldest ally." This alliance is not founded upon a community of cultural interests. It is based upon diplomatic and military necessity. England could have swept Portugal off the map whenever she chose. She preferred not to do so, however, because it was to her advantage to hold territories through friendly nations. This device of control was far less expensive and less likely to arouse jealousy and antagonism. Portugal was too weak to be disloyal to a nation as powerful as England.

Portugal, on her part, benefited by this arrangement; a strong protector in a hostile world was worth cultivating. The time was long past when she and Spain were the great-

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est colonial nations. Spain had been too proud to accept protection, and she lost nearly everything. But Portugal, smaller and weaker, managed to retain a colonial empire that is about twenty-three times her own size. It extends all the way to Africa, India and China.

## A NATURAL LINE OF DEFENSE

What meaning can the Azores have for the United States? In his highly instructive book, *The Ramparts We Watch*, Major George Fielding Eliot writes: "For these islands to pass into German control, either directly or by means of a Portuguese puppet government dominated by Nazi or Fascist influence, would be a matter of such grave concern to this country that it is a question whether we ought not to resist it by force, should it appear imminent."

Rear-Admiral Yates Stirling, former Chief of Staff of the United States Navy, wrote in the Spring of 1938: "Who should have thought seriously a few years ago that the peaceful, harmless Azores may some day, in the possession of hostile nations, become a flaming sword held over the head of this country?" He points out that the Azores are several hundred miles closer to North America than the

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Hawaiian Islands. This latter group is considered absolutely essential for the defense of our country. "The Azores in the hands of a hostile power," Admiral Stirling continues, "must be considered a threat to our Atlantic coast. . . . Our security depends not only in being able to command the seas over hostile areas of our coast, but also in being able to prevent a hostile power from obtaining control over localities near enough to our country from which massed air attacks upon us can be made."

It is not only the line of Newfoundland, Eastern Canada, Bermuda and Porto Rico that forms a defense bulwark, Major Eliot warned in the July 4, 1940, issue of the *New York Herald Tribune*, but also the line of the Azores, Madeira and West Africa. "There should be no doubt left in any one's mind that the United States has a direct and immediate interest in the future of these islands and will not tolerate occupation by any forces which may be considered as possibly hostile to the United States. If they could be leased from Portugal for a period of years or occupied protectively by American garrisons, one would be inclined to breathe more easily."

With remarkable unanimity, naval experts assure us that no other position in the Eastern Atlantic is as favorable for the defense of the Americas, and particularly of the Panama

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Canal, as the Azores, assuming a threat from Europe. They tell us that the central location of these islands permits operations on interior lines both in the Middle and in the South Atlantic.

In view of the foregoing, a chronological record of recent events affecting the Azores will help us better to realize their place in the contemporary world.

The islands came to the fore during the Spanish Civil War, which broke out in the Summer of 1936. The Portuguese Government promptly aligned itself with the counter-revolutionary forces of Generalissimo Franco. It was everyone's secret that the Spanish Rebels were given everything they wanted across the frontier, even though Portugal was nominally neutral. Portugal's ally, Great Britain, did not see quite eye to eye with Lisbon. While the appeasers favored the Rebels, it was clear to those who wanted to see that the Civil War in Spain was a mere prelude to the mass Axis attack on the Allies: Great Britain and France. Spain became a convenient training ground for the German war machine. There "Condor" pilots rehearsed their bombing tactics in maneuvers that were all too realistic for the defenders of Republican Spain. There, too, the Italians took their first lessons in running backward.

A British delegation of Labor parliamentarians brought

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back disturbing tidings from a visit to Spain. They were told by the Spanish Republican Minister of Navy and Air, Indalecio Prieto, that the Germans, on the one side, and Franco and Portugal, on the other, had concluded a deal by which the Third Reich would get the Azores and the Canary Islands for the assistance they had extended to the Rebels. Spain had, of course, the right to dispose of her own territory, and the Canaries were certainly Spanish. But the Azores belonged to Portugal, and Spain had no right whatever to promise them to any foreign Power. According to the information the members of Parliament brought back to London, a deal had also been concluded between Spain and Portugal. Spain was to give Portugal a slice of Galicia on the mainland. Portugal was to hand Spain the Azores.

It is possible that this information was incorrect from beginning to end. Nothing has happened so far to prove that the deals had actually been concluded. It is more likely, however, that it was true at the time the Labor delegation reported back to London, but that meanwhile the Rebels—who became the Government of Spain—had been so weakened that they could not go through with the bargain.

It is a fact that the then head of the Reichswehr, Marshal von Blomberg, visited the Azores in semi-incognito, in the

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Autumn of 1937, while the Civil War was still raging. Not a word of this visit was mentioned even in the American press. Evidently, it was not in the interest of Germany to advertise the trip. But the French magazine, *L'Illustration*, did publish a photograph of the German Marshal landing at an unidentified port of the Azores, and another picture showing him in a glass house for the cultivation of pine-apples. (The unconscious humor of this photograph is obvious only to those familiar with American slang.)

A few months later Great Britain dispatched a military mission to Portugal, described as a "friendship visit to our oldest ally." It was headed by Admiral N. A. Wodehouse. Certain newspapers reported that he had reached an agreement with the Lisbon Government for the use of the Azores by England as a naval and air base in the event of war. Nothing more has been heard about this agreement. But again a few months later, in the early Summer of 1938, the French suggested to the Portuguese that France be granted the right to use the Azores in her North American aviation service. The agreement was reached and even its terms were published, but war was imminent and the French turned their attention elsewhere.

Even before the outbreak of the Second World War, maneuvering for positions in the archipelago was going on

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at an accelerated tempo. The British Minister to Lisbon, Sir Walter Selby, called attention to the curious fact that so many Germans were employed near strategical island stations. At the Horta cable station the Germans outnumbered all other nationals. They had very large staffs also in the paper mill and harbor-improvement contractor's firm, which was owned by subjects of the Third Reich.

### DIPLOMATIC MANEUVERS

Little was heard about the Azores while the war was being fought in the west. Attention was focused on the islands only after the United States began to take a more active part in the war, first as the "arsenal of democracy" and later as England's silent partner. President Roosevelt made an important statement to the press on May 16, 1941, in which he clearly stated that the Government in Washington attached great importance to Dakar and the Atlantic Islands. The United States had fought two undeclared wars, he said. One was against the Barbary pirates and the other against the French pirates in the West Indies. The inference was that the United States might be compelled to wage a third war in Southern waters if any potential

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enemy attempted to seize territories which might affect the United States strategically.

The Portuguese Government protested against this declaration, and the Portuguese Minister at Washington promptly asked for an explanation. The answer of Secretary of State Cordell Hull was clear: "For its part the Government of the United States can state categorically that it harbors no aggressive intentions against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any country." The assurances given by Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles were even more explicit. This Government not only did not desire any change of Portuguese sovereignty, he said, but was anxious to see that Portuguese jurisdiction over the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands remained inviolate. This answer also made it clear that the United States would feel free to take over these islands if Portuguese jurisdiction there were jeopardized. This was implicit in the statement, even though not a word was said about it.

Portugal was not reassured. Now that all diplomatic channels had been exhausted, the Portuguese Government gave instructions to the officially inspired press to sound the alarm. "The Portuguese are determined to defend their country against America," the Government's official newspaper, *Diario Mandan*, solemnly declared. For the first



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time during his incumbency, the President of Portugal, General de Fragosa Carmona, visited the Azores. "I proclaim in this hour and place," he declared on July 27th at Ponta Delgada, "the unshaken and glorious certitude, tested by five centuries of history: This is Portugal!" Several contingents of Portuguese troops were sent to the Azores.

In the late Summer it was reported to the *New York Times* from Rio de Janeiro that a Portuguese mission, the presence of which had aroused great speculation, left Brazil for home. What was the object of the visit of this important mission? There were absolutely no serious problems between the two countries that could not have been solved in the normal diplomatic way. It was suggested—although never admitted even semi-officially—that discussions were underway between the Brazilian and Portuguese Governments over the question of the Atlantic Islands.

"Brazil would be a natural guardian for any Portuguese possession placed in jeopardy," the *New York Times* commented editorially. Brazil, it was suggested, would take over the islands temporarily. This would affect their administration but little, as Brazil and the Azores speak the same language, have the same historical heritage. Since the Brazilian Navy would be in no position to defend the islands against Axis threats, several units of the United

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States Navy would be transferred to our South American friends. In all but name, the United States Navy would be responsible for the protection of the islands.

This plan is both feasible and logical, in the view of Dr. Nicholas Halász, a noted European sociologist, who has given much study and thought to this problem. In a memorandum he has prepared for me he sets forth the reasons:

Although Portugal and Brazil are two independent nations, they are not alien to each other. To the Portuguese, the Brazilian is a grown-up son. This feeling of kinship between them is stronger than between the English and Americans. If the Portuguese should feel that their island possessions were being menaced from any quarter, they would unhesitatingly entrust them to Brazil. As soon as the danger passed, they would expect to have these precious possessions returned to them. Even if they were to lose the islands—as a last resort—they would much rather see them taken by people of their own blood than by any other.

## “FLOWER OF THE OCEAN”

We can deal with the other groups of the Atlantic Islands more summarily. The Madeira group is much closer to

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Africa than are the Azores. From the center of these islands to Africa is only about 360 miles. The nearest island of the Azores archipelago is 490 miles to the northwest, while the Canaries are about 260 miles to the south.

"Flower of the Ocean"—*Flor do Oceano*—is Madeira's popular name. Some of its islands are on the regular route of pleasure cruises. No other group of these islands is frequented by as many tourists as the Madeiras. Only two islands are inhabited: Madeira and Porto Santo. Steamship lines link the Madeiras in normal times not merely to Portugal, Great Britain and the United States, but also to Brazil and the Cape of Good Hope. Cable lines connect them with Portugal, England, the Cape Verde Islands, and thence with Brazil.

These islands are much closer to Gibraltar than any of the other groups. Were that defense to fall, the importance of Madeira for Britain would greatly increase. Some experts assert that Madeira's strategic importance is less than that of the Azores and the Canary Islands. On the other hand, others maintain that an Axis coup in the form of a debouchement may be prevented by ships and planes based on this group of islands, even though Gibraltar were lost.

Like the Azores, this archipelago, too, is a part of Portu-

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gal, and not a colony. The administrative headquarters of the district is Funchal—most popular and probably most beautiful of all Atlantic Island resorts. She has all the conveniences of a great tourist center, which may serve her well in case of war.

The harbors of these islands are no more than adequate. Funchal is the best of them; the only protected anchorages are behind breakwaters. They are never deep, measuring no more than four fathoms, only twenty-four feet. Storms sometimes prevent vessels from coaling in open roadsteads.

Like the other Atlantic Islands, the Madeiras are also of volcanic origin. They are even more mountainous and rugged than the other groups. On the northern shore, rain and storm, wind and waves have carved out gorges. Magnificent rocky summits lend the landscape its incomparable grandeur. Precipitous ravines cut deeply into the land.

There is enough water to keep much of the land permanently verdant. The east wind, called *leste*, is warm and dry. In certain districts the islanders hang damp clothes in front of their windows to keep out the wind-borne sand. Where there is not enough water, the farmers have constructed the most ingenious irrigation tunnels and canals, have surrounded their plots with walls to catch all the moisture and have planted trees to prevent soil erosion.

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Madeira produces wine and sugar, vegetables and fruits, of which pineapples are becoming increasingly important. No more famous grapes are grown than the black and white ones of this Atlantic region, called *Tinta* and *Verdelho*. Madeira wines have a well-established market throughout the world.

The island of Madeira has one of the world's densest populations. Each of its 285 square miles is inhabited by 761 people. The population of the archipelago is 220,000, predominantly of Portuguese descent. There is some little Moorish mixture, and even less Negro. Tourists are charmed by the light-hearted people of these islands. Their life is not as easy as their beautiful setting would suggest, but they take their hardships serenely. Most of the land belongs to absentee owners, and the farmers themselves own merely the cottages, walls and trees. Too much goes to the owners; too little remains in the hands of the peasants. They try to hold on to the land they love, but many of them have been forced to emigrate.

Madeirans like Americans. This is easy to understand, since American tourists spend money lavishly. The islanders do not like the English very much, which is not so easy to understand, since British visitors are even more numerous in peaceful times than Americans. The explanation goes

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beyond mere holiday expenditures; it is that the British occupied these islands twice before, and folk memory on these islands, where so little happens, is long. It is interesting to recall that friendship for Americans is not of recent date. In a book published in 1900, *The Madeira Islands*, by Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, of the noted Philadelphia family, we read: "A very curious notion exists among these simple islanders, to the effect that the American nation desires their annexation and that, indeed, America needs their support.

"Ask a Madeiran of average intelligence what his opinion is on the matter. He will most likely inform you with the greatest assurance that the annexation of Madeira to the United States is a settled thing and that Uncle Sam is awaiting but a favorable opportunity to stretch forth his hand to the Madeirans and lift them from under the monarchical Portuguese yoke."

## THE BLESSED ISLANDS

The Canaries, the third of these island groups, belong to Spain, and not to Portugal, as do the other Atlantic Islands. The Canary Islands sprawl along the great highway of trade toward South America and South Africa. They comprise

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thirteen islands, big and small, a half dozen of them uninhabited. On the map they look like strange bacteria under a powerful microscope. All of them are of volcanic origin, and some of them were catapulted above the water by cataclysmic natural forces. Here the ocean is abysmally deep.

The easternmost islands are only about 100 miles away from the nearest point on the African mainland. The westernmost island is some 500 miles away from the continent. The Cape Verde Islands are 840 miles toward the south. The southernmost island in the archipelago is somewhere near the latitude of Palm Beach.

The Canary Islands form a province of Spain. The two chief towns are Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the seat of the Civil Governor, and Las Palmas, seat of the Court of Appeals and largest city of the islands. They possess also the largest harbors—fairly good, some five fathoms deep at best, thirty feet. The islands have also some smaller ports, such as Santa Cruz de la Palma and Porto de la Cruz.

The islands are pockmarked by *calderas*—craters—attesting their volcanic origin. The archipelago is gashed by *valles*—deep valleys—and *abbarncos*—steep inlets. In this war-torn world it is of little interest that the rugged beauty of the islands appealed to an increasing number of tourists. Nor does it matter so much today that some of the most

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beautiful *patios* of the elegant Sevilla type may be seen in the Canaries, and that in peacetime this paradise catered to the most fastidious globe-trotters.

The climate of the islands was, of course, the chief reason for their popularity as a tourist center. The temperature is neither uncomfortably warm nor cool. The African wind, known here as *Levante*, sometimes sends the thermometer up, but very little. In the Summer, which lasts into October, the northeast winds produce low-lying strata of sea-clouds. In the distant past swarms of locusts visited the islands, and it is recorded that in the year of 1812 the dead bodies of locusts covered the fertile fields of Fuerteventura four feet deep.

Wine-growing was the chief industry of the Canaries for generations, but the devastating plant lice of the phylloxera put a blight upon prosperity. Then the islanders turned to the cochineal, an important dye-stuff, composed of the dried bodies of an insect. They killed the insects in stoves, where their white powdery covering was retained. Thus the natives produced silver-gray cochineal. Or they killed the insects by steam or hot water, making them lose this covering, and the result was black cochineal.

This industry declined because of the competition of German *Ersatz*. Now the islanders grow bananas, engage in



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fishing, grow sugar-cane, cater to tourists, serve as guides and find a precarious livelihood in the ports.

The Canaries have a population of nearly 570,000—more than any other group of Atlantic Islands. The principal island, Tenerife, alone has more than 200,000 inhabitants. The islanders are mostly Spanish, mixed with other strains of Europe and also Africa. Some of the other blends are Irish and Flemish, Norman and Moorish. They absorbed the now-extinct race of Guanchen, who were the masters of these islands at the time of the Spanish conquest. Their language was a Berber dialect, and in their tongue Guanchen meant *guan*—son—*Cherenfe*—their name for the island of Tenerife—the sons of Tenerife. Up to the seventeenth century their language was spoken in these parts, but then it was superseded by Spanish. Even more than the American Indians, the Guanchen had to yield. Today only some pottery designs and native costumes perpetuate their memory.

The name of these islands, *Islas Canarias*, means Dog Islands. Legend tells us that about forty years before the beginning of the Christian era, the King of Mauretania—Morocco today—far-famed Juba II, as great a scholar as a ruler, having heard about these islands, sent an expedition. There his men unearthed the foundations of massive buildings, from which they concluded that the extinct aborigines

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had achieved a high level of culture. They also found many huge dogs, which suggested to them the name of the islands, Gran Canaria.

The Canaries were sometimes called *Fortunatae Insulae*, the Blessed Isles. In the opinion of some scholars, this designation applied also to Madeira, or perhaps to the Azores as well. In the mythology of the Greeks, these happy islands were peopled by mortals upon whom the gods had conferred immortality. These fortunate people enjoyed unlimited abundance under a smiling sky. Even today the Canaries are sometimes referred to in the Latin world as *Islas Afortunadas*, Islands of the Blessed.

In the history of the Americas, the Canary Islands played an important role, because it was from there that Columbus set sail for the conquest of the New World. The Spanish Government fears that today the roles may be reversed. This time the Americas must play a decisive part in the history of the Canary Islands.

It was on Friday, August 3, 1492, at eight in the morning, that Columbus' small fleet with eighty-eight souls aboard, sailed for the Canary Islands. Three days later they put in at Tenerife to refit one of the caravels. Once more they weighed anchor in great haste because word had reached

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them that Portuguese forces were assembling to intercept their fleet.

Less important but even more dramatic was the event for which these islands gained the reputation of being invincible. This was the famous sea-battle of Santa Cruz de Tenerife. It was the only battle which the great Nelson ever lost. It was there, too, that he lost his right arm.

In that year of 1797 England was at war with Spain and France. Nelson was serving under Sir John Jervis. He received orders to capture Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The purpose of the attack was to seize the treasure which the Spanish galleon, *El Principe de Asturias*, had just landed. The forces of Nelson consisted of four ships of war, three frigates, one cutter, one mortar, one gunboat, with a total of 393 guns and 1,500 men. About 700 men were directed to the mole in a surprise midnight attack, which the commander of the entire force, Nelson, himself led. It was not until the very last moment that the Spanish defenders detected them, and opened fire from forty guns. Their sudden fire shattered most of the boats that had reached the mole. Others had missed it in the dark and were stove in by the surf. As Nelson stepped on the jetty, a cannon ball ripped his right arm at the elbow, and he fell back into the boat. Without the benefit of a light even, his arm was amputated

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on the spot. Retaining his consciousness all the time, he gave orders that reinforcements be sent.

The English fought well, but the Spaniards outfought them. The attacking forces lost the battle, but not their honor. This was recognized even by the defenders, and their gallant commander, General Don Antonio Gutierrez, ordered his batteries to fire a volley of compliments to the beaten foe. Not satisfied with this amenity, the two commanders exchanged presents of cheese, beer and wine. In the church of Santa Cruz in the Canaries two banners of the great hero, Viscount Horatio Nelson, Duke of Bronte, may still be seen.

Little was known about the Canaries for a long time. Revolts punctuated the great silence at intervals. If the islanders disliked a government measure, they were quick to load—and fire—their pistols. After the First World War, when Primo de Rivera took the helm in Spain as the dictator, he sent some of his political opponents into exile in the Canaries. After his downfall, the Republic was established. It sent some generals to the Canaries to command the armed forces there. It took this step in the belief that the islands were far away and the ambitious military men would grow drowsy and ineffectual under the semi-tropical sun. In this the Republican leaders miscalculated. In the obscurity of

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the islands the generals could plot conspiracies to their heart's content. It was there that General Franco and his fellow-conspirators hatched the rebellion which became one of the most tragic civil wars in all history.

Today the Canaries are being fortified. In normal times the islands are protected by some 5,000 men, divided into regiments of infantry, squadrons of mounted rifles and companies of garrison artillery. The entire archipelago is divided into two naval squadrons, commanded by captains. Late in 1940 the construction of a large military and air base was started at Las Palmas. Freshly dug earth on the hills indicated newly built trenches, a report in the *New York Times* of September 7, 1941, stated. Small concrete buildings along the shoreline look very much like machine-gun nests. Soldiers and sentinels are everywhere. Barbed wire protects large areas further inland. The local newspapers print only official German dispatches. German signs are displayed in many shops, and the insignia of the Nazi Elite Guard, S.S., is everywhere in evidence.

A sensational item was printed in a leading newspaper of the Spanish Falangists, *Arriba*, on July 31, 1941. At the United States Embassy in Mexico City, this newspaper wrote, a conference took place recently between American officials and General José Miaja, a commander of the former

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Republican army of Spain, at which plans were formulated to seize the Canary Islands. Informed of the story, General Miaja said, laughing, that evidently he still had some friends in Spain who wished him well. The American Ambassador at Mexico City denied that any such conference had ever been held. "The story is a complete and total lie," Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles declared. This canard certainly betrays the uneasiness felt by the Franco regime for the security of the Canary Islands.

### THE STRATEGICAL CAPE VERDES

The last of these groups in the Atlantic are the Cape Verde Islands. They are not to be confused with the Cape Vert or Cape Verde peninsula, on which Dakar is situated. Dakar is some 300 miles to the east. From Cape Verde to Barbados, in the British West Indies, the distance is only 2,000 miles, and to New York it is about 3,000 miles.

In this archipelago there are fourteen islands in a semi-circle, its points facing America. There are two groups of islands, the Windward Islands, *Barlavento*, and the Leeward Islands, *Sotavento*.

The Cape Verdes are on the most direct route from

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European ports to Brazil. Their ports are also suitable for much of the trade between North America and the west coast of Africa. Because of the competition of Cape Verde, Dakar had its greatest struggle to become the chief port of Western Africa.

Most of the islands are arid, for this is desert Africa projected into the Atlantic Ocean. San Vincente looks like a landscape in the moon—f forbidding, frightening, fantastic. The lava formations of these volcanic cones were tortured into grotesque shapes by tropical wind and rain. The islands are becoming even more arid, as the desert zone extends southward on the African mainland.

There are some tall mountains on the islands, and as one ascends the barren landscape changes. The mountain slopes are often as richly carpeted with fresh grass as the lush Swiss *almen*. Here temperate climate reigns.

The stony lowlands are broken by *ribeiras*, well-watered tropical valleys, green with coffee-bushes, manioc, sugarcane, corn, tamarind, cocoanut palms and mangoes. The coffee of these islands is so strong that it must be mixed with three or four times its own weight of milder coffee to temper it. Cotton is also grown in the islands, but only on a small scale. There are many fibers in the wasteland, such as the Mexican aloe. The oily seeds of the *purgueira* are treated

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as lubricants and used as raw material for soap. There are also mineral waters and salt on the islands. Industries are lacking, except for a few small textile and brewery plants.

The Cape Verde Islands are chronically poor. From time to time famine sweeps the archipelago. This need not be so. Nature has provided them with all they need. It has been asserted that they can produce all that the Canaries grow, and even more, because here coffee prospers. To the mainland Portuguese, the Cape Verde Islands are known only from newspaper headlines.

The islands have two principal harbors: Mindello or Porto Grande, on the island of San Vincente, and Praia, capital of the archipelago, on the island of San Thiago. These are much better ports than any we have encountered so far on the other Atlantic Islands. The entrance to the Mindello harbor is fully two miles wide, and the water is twenty-two fathoms deep. Praia is an open bay, the entrance of which is a mile and a half. Fierce storms sometimes prevent large ships from entering that port. In normal years about 3,000 vessels call, representing a tonnage of 3,500,000. Coal is a big business of the Cape Verdes. Freight rates to Argentina are high, and it is profitable for ships to fill all available space with cargo. Midway between Europe



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and South America—at the Cape Verde Islands—they refill their bunkers.

The climate is less favorable on these islands than on the ones farther north, but it is infinitely better than on the African mainland at this latitude. The islands are visited by the tail-end of the *harmattan*, known here as the *brisa*. Although less dry after its long trip across the ocean, it retains some of the sand it collects in Africa.

The population of the Cape Verde Islands is about 165,000. Only about 7,000 of these are Portuguese; the others are black or mixtures. The majority are descendants of the slaves from the Guinea coast of West Africa. At one time this, too, was an important slave center. The inhabitants are afflicted with some of the diseases which decimate their kinsmen on the mainland. Yellow fever is virtually extinct, but there is much malaria and even some leprosy.

The Portuguese Government never lavished its affections on these islands. Unlike the other Atlantic archipelagoes, the Cape Verde Islands are colonies and not parts of the Republic. They have been robbed in a variety of ways. The greatest devastation was wrought by killing off the forests, which regulated the flow of water. Now the rains of the Summer go to waste in eroded gullies which connect directly with the sea. What man began, the goats ended by

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eating up the tender plants that struggled for life on the barren rock. Reforestation could accomplish miracles even today.

The strategical importance of the Cape Verde Islands is attested by history. The last time a European navy invaded the Western Hemisphere, its point of departure was from Cape Verde. The Spanish fleet sailed from here on April 29, 1898, under the command of Admiral Pascual Cervera y Topete. It touched the French island of Martinique on May 11th, the Dutch island of Curaçao three days later, reaching Cuba on May 19th. It was only two days later that the United States forces appeared before Santiago and Cienfuegos under the command of Winfield Scott Schley. The great teacher of naval strategy, the late Admiral Alfred T. Mahan, commenting on the war with Spain, wrote that the United States could never again expect to face an enemy so entirely inept as Spain showed herself to be.

## OTHER BASES

Off the tropical coast of Portuguese Guinea there is an obscure group of small islands on which, according to stories reaching the outside world after the outbreak of the Second

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World War, the Germans have been trying feverishly to get a foothold. These are the Bissago Islands. Reich colonizers were said to have established headquarters on three of them: Bubaque, Candahaqua and Ruban.

The Bissago Islands are luxuriant tropical forest land, which would be very rich indeed if the climate were at all tolerable. Here are grown custard apple, guava, the papaw fruit, the banana, orange and citron. An abundance of indigo, ground and kola nuts, tobacco, cotton and coffee could be cultivated. By far the most valuable product, however, is palm oil.

The islands are in a forbidding country of lagoons, where anchorages are almost impossible to find. But they are not far from Bolama, the capital of the colony, which American trans-Atlantic clippers use as a take-off station on the trip across the ocean in the Winter.

The Bissagos are about as far away from the world as any place in tropical Africa can be. Whatever we know about them is based on the accounts of eye-witnesses, and they are rare. One of them wrote about his knowledge of this forsaken land in the September 26, 1941, issue of *Neue Volkszeitung*, a New York liberal, anti-Hitler German-language newspaper.

The Germans established themselves on the Bissago.

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Islands, this eye-witness says, as early as 1922. Officially it was given out that they were there in order to improve the production of palm oil. They built modern factories, an electrical plant, a port and wharves. They exported only about 500 tons of palm oil and 1,150 tons of palm nuts. They have produced more. What happened to the rest of the yield? A Portuguese customs official told the *Volkszeitung* reporter that the Germans must have built up a reserve of at least 15,000 tons. It was meant probably as fuel-oil for German submarines and planes.

*Es ist verboten hier zu landen*—it is forbidden to land here—warned the curious that this part of African Portugal was in German hands. Forts and ports, airdromes and U-boat bases were built at the Bissagos, tropical Africa whispered. Nothing positive was known about their extent and strength. But it was known to everyone that no natives were employed after the Nazis had taken over. It soon became a matter of public knowledge that the engineers and workers in the plants were crack German officers and non-coms.

After the outbreak of the Second World War—the same eye-witness reports—the Governor of Portuguese Guinea disregarded the sign forbidding access to the islands, inspected them himself, and left a force of Portuguese

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gendarmes on the spot. What he did may have been "too little and too late." Only the future will tell. Should the war flare into the open in West Africa, the Bissago Islands will break their tropical silence and make themselves heard in an emphatic way.

## OUTPOSTS IN THE ATLANTIC

As Walter Lippmann pointed out in a syndicated article, the approaches to the Western Hemisphere are controlled by a chain of islands stretching from Cape Verde to the Azores. The Cape Verde Islands straddle the great ocean route at the very point where the Atlantic Ocean is narrowest. At the present time, the Great Powers are playing hide-and-seek. Germany is evidently not yet strong enough to defy Great Britain in her element. Should, however, the war drag on and the final decision be shifted to the Atlantic, the Third Reich will have to make a decision about the Atlantic Islands. From there she can attempt to knock out her enemies. From there she can strangle Great Britain and deliver the mortal blow which would sever the great arteries of England's lifeline. It is not impossible, of course, that

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Germany's enemies will take the initiative before the Third Reich is ready to deliver this blow.

Major George Fielding Eliot pointed out that the Germans are adept in making flanking or enveloping attacks, avoiding direct assault and depending upon the indirect method. If the United States were engaged in the North Atlantic, they would seek to divert us to the South Atlantic. They need bases to do this, and these bases are either on the Atlantic Islands or on the west coast of Africa. Right now they lack the mobility which command of the seas confers. They would prefer to have bases which they can reach overland. Dakar is just such a base. Should the Germans break into the Atlantic with the naval forces they are building and which they are endeavoring to wrest from the Italians, their "allies," they could direct their attack against the Atlantic Islands. The war would then be brought directly to the front door of the Americas.



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